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# APOLOGY,

Being a SERIES of

# ARGUMENTS

In PROOF of the

# Christian Religion.

W I T H

A POSTSCRIPT, concerning a late  
Irreverent and Unbecoming Manner of Treat-  
ing Religious Subjects in the Stile of Ridicule.

ADDRESS'D to all

## Impartial FREE-THINKERS.

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*All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.* Psal. xxv. 10.

*As his ways are plain unto the holy, so are they stumbling-blocks unto the wicked.* Ecclius xxxix. 24.

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Homines ideo falluntur, quod aut religionem suscipiunt omissa sapientia, aut sapientiae soli student, omissa religione, cum alterum sine altero esse non possit verum. *Lactan. l. 3. de falsa sap.*

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*By EDWARD ASPINWALL, D.D.* h  
Sub-dean of his MAJESTY's Chapel Royal, and  
Prebendary of St. Peter's, Westminster.

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*L O N D O N :*

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M. DCC. XXXI.

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London, England



To all IMPARTIAL  
FREE-THINKERS.

Gentlemen,

 Take this occasion to declare myself to be of the number of those, that not only think, but speak with freedom, with a just and rational freedom touching matters of Religion: And therefore, that I will not receive any Article or Doctrine of faith or practice, for which I cannot alledge strong and clear Arguments that it is agreeable to

## To all IMPARTIAL

reason and truth. And I further declare, that in my whole proceeding with relation to my religious belief and practice according to the doctrine and precepts of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I have made it my sincere and labour'd concern to divest myself of every byas or influence that interest or blind passion might bring upon me, to the end that my mind, being (I think) perfectly disingag'd from all partial and unworthy motives, might remain absolutely free to determine itself by solid reason in the choice of reveal'd Religion. And I believe every worthy and learned Professor of the Christian Doctrine will approve of this my method of examining and receiving the Articles of the Christian Belief, Worship and Practice. And I think it perfectly

## FREE-THINKERS.

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fectly conformable to the spirit of the Gospel, of the first Reformers of Religion, of Protestantism in general, and in particular of the Church of England, whose truly Wise and Christian Moderation in the proposal of her Articles of faith, so happily suited to English Liberty, can never be enough esteem'd and respected by her happy Members; and a generous mind ought therefore to be the more cautious of making an ill use of so noble and blessed a Constitution in Church and State.

I again further declare, that if any Christian Society, or Communion of Christians, shou'd go about to debar me of my abovesaid method of trying and receiving their doctrines of faith and practice, this wou'd be a strong presumption to me, that the Truth of Christ is not among them,

A 3

and

## To all IMPARTIAL

and I wou'd therefore, by all just means possible, endeavour to estrange myself from them. Having premis'd this publick declaration of my disposition of mind with regard to my consideration and opinion in matters of Religion,

I take the liberty to present you, and the publick in general, in the following sheets, with the Grounds and Reasons of my belief in Christ. And that my purpose might be every way complete, I thought it necessary to compose an entire System of Arguments in proof of my faith, and from the foundation itself, of Religion in general, to form a climax or gradation of Arguments, the one supporting the other, that by many sure and well-laid steps, I might at length arrive at the principal Truth, to which all the foregoing ones directly tended and

and were design'd; and, being thus fix'd in the possession of that saving and most happy Truth, I might seriously apply myself to fulfil all the duties it recommended, and partake of all the blessings therein stipulated. And, I confess, I think this System of Arguments so strong and convincing, that I had once resolv'd to entitle it, in imitation of some learned Writers, *Demonstratio Evangelica, or a demonstrative Proof of the Christian Religion.* But I was diverted from this resolution by this consideration, that however demonstrative I might judge those arguments to be of the Gospel Truths, yet, as there are (unhappily for us) some men of learning and judgment in other matters, that will not allow of any such force to be contain'd in those arguments, I was afraid such a Title,

being prefix'd at the entrance of those Arguments, might give offence to them, and appear a rudeness on their behalf, to be by all means avoided, especially in treating of matters of Religion. And therefore this poor Labour of mine bears the Title under which it now appears.

I wou'd moreover crave leave to observe, that it is become a kind of fashion among those that distinguish themselves in their discourses against the Christian Religion, to affect to show a more than ordinary respect and value for the Philosophic Tracts of the Antients. It is confess'd, that those writings do challenge a just esteem and commendation ; and, I think, the interest of our most holy Profession is no way concern'd to disallow of that just praise which is

is due to them. But then this praise and this esteem ought not to be rais'd above the merit those writings really have. Virtue is in it self so amiable, bears so perfect a relation to a rational mind, is so true a resemblance of that excellent Being, which is the very fountain of all virtue, and is goodness itself, and is so truly the only means to render mankind happy in every state and condition of life, and the only path to immortality, that it cannot seem strange, if some few men at least, amidst such infinite numbers, shou'd, according to their more refin'd genius and capacity, have occasionally interspers'd, in their several compositions, some excellent thoughts concerning Virtue. They have however left us room enough to observe, that those Antient Sages

To all IMPARTIAL  
bad by no means a pure and perfect  
notion of Virtue, as taken in its  
proper latitude.

I had intended in this place to  
have drawn out at large a collection  
of citations out of the principal Phi-  
losophers and Sects of them, to lay  
before the Reader the many gross  
and unworthy sentiments they have  
entertain'd, and transmitted to us in  
manifest contradiction to clear and  
universal notions of true Virtue.  
But my Lord Bishop of London,  
in his most excellent, as well as  
From pag. 10. to 24. learned Second Pastoral Letter, has  
already done this with so much ac-  
curacy, and with so much aptitude  
to every capacity, that I may justly  
content myself with referring the  
Reader, how learned soever, to  
that so worthy a performance. One  
reflexion however may be worth  
our

our notice on this occasion, that from the beginning of the book of Genesis to the end of that of Revelations, there is not one line concerning the Deity or Virtue (and this is the principal Theme of the whole volume of the Scriptures) that contains one expression derogatory from either of them, and that does not treat of them both (wherever they are mention'd) worthily, and with a perfect conformity to reason. And what can afford us a stronger idea of the holy Scriptures being the inspir'd word of the divine Spirit, than the truth of this observation?

That the Philosophers of old were men of great abilities, both natural and acquir'd, their works sufficiently testify; and yet that all of them have advanc'd or join'd in atheist-

sent

sent to very gross, very absurd nations concerning God and Moral Virtue, and even on other subjects have sometimes utter'd mean thoughts unworthy of their character, their works also are their own witnesses against them. If the advantage of an extraordinary genius and capacity, if the happiness of being carry'd thro' the course of a learned education under the care of the most learned and experienc'd Masters, if the dint of continu'd labour and study, cou'd have exalted the mind of degenerated man to an unerring knowledge of God and of morality, this happy privilege might reasonably have been expected in such men. But since we find this pure and untainted notion of God and of Virtue in the sacred Scriptures only, to what else can we ascribe this so superior

perior an excellency above those learned Chiefs among the Antients, but to the Holy Spirit of God, under whose immediate direction those sacred writings were first divulg'd to the world?

I have another observation on this Head to suggest; and it is, that tho' many of the Philosophers have indeed spoken many elegant and affecting truths concerning Virtue, yet not one of them (I have not heard of one of them, that) has undertaken to compose any formal or regular System of Religion, that is, of a distinct knowledge and determinate worship of God, of the final end of man from his first entrance upon the stage of life, so as that he may plainly understand how, and for what purpose he was brought into Being, by what direct means

he

he is to arrive at this end, and what in particular this final end is. It is of little use to treat, as it were by the way, and occasionally, of the excellence of Virtue, unless we can ascertain to those that read or hear some particular excellent and desirable good they are certainly to obtain by the practice of it. This is a noble Theme, that hitherto has escap'd the labour and pens of the old Philosophers; they have not left us one express and regular treatise of piety towards God, and of the worship of God, whereby their people or scholars might regularly form their actions and conduct in life in a course of piety and religious duty. Their chief aim, as far as appears by their works that have continu'd to our time, seems to have been to induce their Hear-

ers

ers and Readers so to frame their whole deportment, as to render themselves regular and useful members of Society and of the Commonwealth. But they have taken no pains to instil into them necessary practical notions of piety towards God, or of a religious consecration of themselves to him in obedience to his divine laws for the sake of pleasing God by a purity of life and manners, and of attaining to a high pitch of his favour in this mortal state, and of acquiring to themselves some further blessed retribution from God, when they shall have resign'd this transitory life, which at present they employ in his service and in duty to him. I say, those learned Teachers have left us no express treatises on subjects of this nature, no constitution of rules and precepts in order

to such excellent purposes, as these I have now mention'd. They have indeed sometimes occasionally, as I before observ'd, let fall from their pens some encouraging expressions in behalf of Virtue in general, that the Gods wou'd accept the practice of it, and assign some recompence to the virtuous; but it was chiefly the great and the mighty that are celebrated and fam'd for their being assum'd to be plac'd in the Orbs above; we scarce find the mention of any inferior person, eminent for his Virtue, that has the honour of his Name being transmitted to us, who did not render himself singularly useful to the State in faits of arms, or was not remarkable for his wisdom or council, or more than ordinary advancement in the study of the Sciences. So that Virtue seems

to have been to the Antients a subject at large, whereon they cou'd expatiate at pleasure, as it fell in their way, but whereof they had very imperfect, and but general ideas.

And furthermore, how beautiful soever and pleasing their descriptions of Virtue may seem to us, the encouragements to the practice of it they cou'd suggest, were so faint and ineffectual, that it cou'd hardly be worth the while, for the sake of them, that men shou'd curb and mortify their passions and appetites, and support a continual struggle against them. And indeed, what commission or power had the very Chiefs of the Antients to ascertain any reward to the Virtuous? Reason was the only ground they cou'd go upon; and this was common to all; and every one was  
[ a ]                   equally

equally entitled to judge and suppose in this matter, as was most agreeable to him. And it is next to impossible, that they shou'd all have concurr'd in the same notion concerning so momentous a point, which was left at large and undetermin'd: and this we find was the real matter of fact; for their determinations on this Article, which is the very spring and life of Virtue, were very opposite to, at least very different from, one another. One of the most celebrated Sects among them constantly affirm'd, that Virtue was its own reward. But was this capable of giving any check or controul to youthful appetites and salleys, or of rooting out the more confirm'd vices of advanc'd Age?

The Stoicks.

Epicurean. Another very numerous Sect propos'd as a reward of Virtue, an habitual temper and moderation of desire

desire and pleasure, which, in effect, was to procure soundness, and health of body and mind, with every faculty of them, in its due frame and condition, which wou'd render life in the most proper manner agreeable and subject to the least pain and uneasiness. But this opinion was so far from providing a remedy, that it pull'd up and laid waste all the fences against vice, and prov'd the very out-let to voluptuousness, to sensuality and libertinism.

Those of them who have handled this question more unexceptionably, and with a view to a more refin'd and rational Good, have notwithstanding deliver'd their sentiments in so loose and uncertain an expression, as to challenge little credit or confidence from others; so that it cou'd not be expected that, for the sake of their judgment, other

*Laetan.  
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the Philo-  
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from Ci-  
cero, Se-  
neca, A-  
thenaeus,  
pag. 182  
—6.*

men shou'd refrain from those pursuits which were more delightful to them; and especially when the very Teachers themselves, by their own practice, gave room to suspect, that they really were not of an opinion that there wou'd be any after-recompence adjudg'd to the Virtuous. And above all, the whole System of the Antient Philosophy was so tinctur'd with the notion of Fate and Destiny (so rigidly immutable, that even the Father of the Gods was bound by it) that it is not easy to conceive how consistently with that notion the mind of man can be said to be perfectly free and undetermin'd in the choice of his actions with relation to virtue and vice.

These are heads of thought, which on this occasion I make bold to lay before you. You are more vers'd in those sort of writings than I am; and

and you are therefore the more proper witnesses of the truth of what I have now been saying. Give me leave to be so bold as to entreat you to make yourselves as well acquainted with the holy Scriptures, as you have taken pains to be learned in the knowledge of the Philosophick writings; meditate upon them; they are a fund of much more extensive, of infinitely more important and useful knowledge, than all the volumes of the Antients put together. You will find in those Holy Scriptures a most divine System of Virtue, a most excellent improvement of our reason and knowledge; there you will distinctly learn how man was form'd by the hand of God; what his chief business is in this present mortal state; what our particular duty in it is, as the creatures, servants, or subjects and children of God; what,

as fellow-creatures, and members of society, and neighbours to one another; whither we are continually travelling on thro' the different stages of life; for what ultimate end we were originally design'd; by what steps and means we are to arrive at it; and what are the snares, the dangers and precipices that lie in our passage; and how we may with safety avoid them. All these particulars you may see very plainly and appositely drawn out in the above recommended Pastoral Letter, from pag. 51, to 58.

But what I wou'd, with the most pressing earnestness, beseech you to take into your free and impartial consideration, is the infinitely different view of the Christian Religion, and of Modern Scepticism. As far as one can observe from the writings of Modern Scepticks, or, as they are still,

stil'd, Free-thinkers, their chief (perhaps only) aim seems to be, to combat all the establish'd and fix'd notions of Religion that have possess'd the minds of men for a long succession of Ages and Generations ; they themselves in the mean time not once undertaking to propose, in lieu of the Christian Institution, any settled Scheme of Religion, whereby men may duly apprehend their duty and obligation to God, to the Civil Magistrate, and to one another. On the contrary, there is reason to fear, that many (I will not say all) of these Scepticks have no further regard than to the present life ; and consequently, that the final end they hope for, is Annihilation (as some term it) after the dissolution of their bodies.

But I most urgently beseech you to consider, how unworthy, how be-

[ a 4 ] neath

neath the dignity of a rational mind such sentiments are concerning the condition of Human Nature; to how uncomfortable and discouraging a state this wou'd reduce mankind, wherein, having a natural and a strong thirst and desire of immortality, or continuance in life, we shou'd live in a strange, fortuitous and painful mixture of ease, and of much pain and sorrow, and in this mournful circumstance conclude and breath out an inconstant, uncertain life, and then, like the rotten fruit on the ground, mix with its stench and putrefaction, and no more to be found of us. Think moreover, how unworthy such a System of Nature is of an All-wise Being, to bring into life a species of creatures of an intelligent and thinking mind, capable of being influenc'd by pure rational motives, that have naturally inherent

inherent in them a quick notion and sense of an immortal life, and an innate longing after it, and yet, according to this System, utterly subject to the caprice of fortune and chance, to frequent pains of body, and sorrow of mind, to the malice and iniquity of their fellow-creature; and again, always obnoxious to the terrors and apprehension of the divine or some superior power over them; think, I say, how unworthy such a System of Nature is of an All-wise Being, to form such a species and collection of Beings for no other purpose but to wither and consume away like the Autumn fruit, with this melancholy disadvantage, that the life of man is worn and pour'd out in the midst of anguish, and the quick sense of pain and dying groans, whereas the vegetable lives and flourishes,

and

and withers away insensibly. I cou'd further recommend to your consideration, what a Chaos and Confusion such notions as these (shou'd they gain any degree of credit among men) wou'd inevitably cause in the world, what distrust among men of one another, what dissolution of all the tyes of relation, friendship, neighbourly commerce, and civil unity? But I wou'd rather desire that men shou'd be led by more noble and sublime motives; motives suited to the dignity of a rational mind; motives of the honour and worship of God, and of immortality.

But the main Point (which I chiefly aim at) of the difference of the views of the Christian Religion, and of Modern Scepticism, is this: The Christian Religion undertakes, upon a foundation as strong as arguments,

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gumments, next to self-evident, can render it, to ascertain to men immortality and eternal life in a state of absolute felicity in the presence of God, upon certain terms to be perform'd on their part, highly agreeable to reason and the nature of man, and in general easy and light; and on what occasion soever the burden of them may appear heavier, and may be attended with a failure in duty, those terms or conditions are so temper'd with divine mercy and tender compassion, that we have always a remedy at hand, and an easy means of recovering the ground we may have lost, and of going on forwards towards the goal that is set before us with more prosperous success.

On the opposite side, Irreligion (I will not say Modern Scepticism, because I hope some under this character

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raeter are not of the number of those I am here treating of; Irreligion, I say, on the opposite side) proposes to those that range themselves under her conduct, an absolute immunity from the terrors of any after-reckoning, and an utter annihilation and extinction out of the whole System of Beings, when the thread of this life is broken off, and their portion of years quite run out. But there is one very pinching circumstance that attends this their proposal, and that is, that there is not one solid (I may venture to say, not one frail) argument to be offer'd in support of this immunity from an after-reckoning, and for this utter perishing out of the number of Beings; the whole of it resting upon this shadow of a support, a grand peut etre, a meer may-be; against which the whole power of reason  
+  
and

and divine testimony strongly opposes itself. Here then the whole matter is brought to a very short and plain issue, Whether a life of virtue, embrac'd and put in practice for the sake of the true and acceptable worship of God, and in obedience to the divine laws, join'd with the certain (*as far as reason and divine testimony can render certain, the*) hope of immortality and eternal happiness, or a life of sobriety and temperance, undertaken purely for the sake of a less painful enjoyment of the goods of this life, which in a few years is suppos'd (*and is but suppos'd*) to terminate in an absolute annihilation, but which, *for ought they know*, perhaps may terminate in a most execrable subsistence after death, under the wrathful vengeance and punishment of an incens'd Almighty Judge and God;

*I say,*

*I say, the whole issue of this matter  
is this, Which of these two states  
challenges preferably our attention  
and our choice ?*

*I conclude, bumbly beseeching  
God to give you, and all men, a  
true impartiality in the considera-  
tion of the important truths of Reli-  
gion; a true sense of God's goodness  
to Man thro' his Divine Son Jesus  
Christ; a sincere and solid love of  
God, and an awful subjection to  
his Almighty Rule and Power  
over us.*

E. ASPINWALL.



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### ERRATA.

Page 174. line 7. instead of indifferent, read individual.  
Page 201. line 1. instead of them, read him. Page 381.  
line 3. instead of state, read taste.



A SERIES of  
**ARGUMENTS**  
In PROOF of the  
**CHRISTIAN RELIGION.**

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**C H A P. I.**

*A Proæmial Discourse concerning the Cavillers against Christ's holy Religion, and their manner of Arguing against it. A short Answer to A. C. Esquire's short Pamphlet against Liberty, or the Free-Will of Man. The chief Heads of the following Book.*

 T may, I fear, with too much reason be suspected, that the present age of liberty, and (as it affects to be thought) of all polite literature, seems to have grown weary of all solid and useful subjects of study, and thereby to have degenerated

*Arguments in Proof of*

nerated into fickle Scepticism, and an affected and captious quarrelling with all those religious truths, which have been maintain'd, believ'd and entertain'd in all ages hitherto (from the first promulgation of them) by an infinite number of men of the most refin'd, solid and impartial learning and knowledge. And to what shall we ascribe this so strange and so unhappy a degeneracy? Is it, that the solid and plain truths of our most holy Religion have lost any degree of their force of credibility? Have the *disputers* of this impotent age imagin'd any new System of Arguments to startle the firmness of our adherence to the belief of those most excellent and infallible truths? Alas! What have they been doing all this while, but raking into the filth of the times that are past, and taking fruitless pains to raise the very same mist again, their faithless leaders have often vainly endeavour'd to do before them, which hitherto never cou'd, and I am sure never will, be able to darken the brightness and strength of those heavenly doctrines which *the only begotten Son of God* has immoveably founded on earth?

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What other account then may we reasonably give of this wicked corruption in men's principles, and of their inlisting themselves in the band of infidelity and irreligion (may I not add, of Atheism too?) but this, which we find, *Gen. vi. 5.* that *the wickedness of these men is great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually;* in few words, that as many of them will not submit to any restraint laid upon their manners and bodily pleasures by the natural and divine laws of temperance and sobriety, so neither will they suffer the divine authority to set bounds to the liberty of their thoughts and extravagant imaginations.

If these Men, in their Searches into the Grounds and Reasons of religious Truths, wou'd put on the same Candor, the same moderate and impartial Disposition of Mind, which they affect to do, when they are chosen Arbitrators to examine the Pretensions, and amicably determine a Controversy between two of their contending Friends; if they wou'd not suffer themselves to be too much actuated by their blind Lusts and Passions, and over-

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bias'd by Motives that rather administer Pleasure to their corrupt Affections, than real Conviction to their Minds; if they wou'd endeavour to check a little that Rancor (shall I call it?) or Displeasure against the whole Clergy, the Ministers of Christ, which usually swell's their Writings against Religion; if, lastly, they wou'd not first precipitously resolve (I may say both natural and) reveal'd Religion to be all a Farce, a mere human Device and Stratagem, and then set themselves to work by ransacking the very worst, the very scum of Authors to support and keep in countenance this so strange and blind a Resolution, the bright Rays of the Divine Doctrines would find a more easy passage into their hearts and minds, they would easily discern the poisonous fallacy of their arguments, which they seem at present to be so fond of, in opposition to those divine doctrines; and by such an impartial consideration of religious truths, they wou'd, by the blessing of God, be fill'd both with conviction to their mind, and comfort to their souls. And till such men can be prevail'd upon to put on this truly worthy and rational frame and tem-

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per of mind, we must expect that they will still go on to blaspheme God and his Christ, to encourage themselves in wickedness, in order to extort from men the only solid comfort in life, namely, the firm belief that we live under the gracious government and providence of an all-wise, just and merciful God, who will recompense all men according to their behaviour in this state of probation ; the *good* with a blessed resurrection to endless glory and felicity, the *wicked* with everlasting misery. Lastly, we must expect that they will still continue their endeavour to poison men's minds with a contempt of all things sacred and beneficial to civil society, and lay the foundation amongst men of mistrust in one another, of selfishness, secret designs and practices, contrary to the common welfare of mankind, in order to promote their own selfish views and worldly contentments, and thus root out of their minds the very essential principles and mutual ties on which is built the whole frame of political governments, and that most necessary, comforting, friendly and mutual help men owe to one another.

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I say, they will still go on to sow the pestilent seeds amongst men of a general mistrust of one another, of selfishness, of secret designs and practices against one another, highly prejudicial to the common peace and welfare of mankind, in order to secure or provide for their own interested purposes. For if Religion is nothing more than Priestcraft, a trick of state; if Conscience is an idle name, a bugbear, dress'd up at first by silly maid's and nurses, and then nurtur'd up by weak parents and bigots; if there be no such thing as a wise and just providence of God, or at least a very negligent and maimed one (God being no way concern'd in what passeth here below) if there is no account at all to be given of what passeth within us, or of what wrongs and wickednesse's soever we do that escape the knowledge of the civil power, and consequently if we have nothing to apprehend from God for what disorders, cruelties, or injustices soever, whether secret or publick, we may venture to perpetrate, what motive can be alledg'd forcible enough to prevail with men to act with honesty and faithfulness in their dealings with one another,

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other, to afford their cheerful and ready assistance and relief in their several distresses and wants, to withhold men from secretly wounding or treacherously taking away that life from their fellow-creature, which God the Author graciously gave him, when this may help to aggrandize their own wealth and power? in a word, if this should be our miserable case, what possibly could hinder men from being thoroughly jealous of one another in every incident and step of life, and in consequence of this unnatural and suspicious mistrust, from putting on a savage countenance and behaviour towards their fellow-creature, and by that means of rendring life, which was given as a common blessing to all, the very source of confusion, sorrow, and calamity?

I own the system of a fortuitous jumble and subsiding together of the things this machine of the universe consists of, may be pertinent enough to support such sentiments as these are: but surely no one will be so senseless as to pretend, that an all-powerful and all-wise *Being* could have founded and form'd this infinite,

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most harmonious and accomplish'd work of heaven and earth, and, as if tir'd with so huge an undertaking, have rid his hands of it all at once, and left it for the future to it self.

I ought indeed, before I set my hand to work on this Apology, to entreat the pardon of the whole Society of Christians in all places and kingdoms, who firmly adhere to the belief of those divine Truths God has been pleas'd to make known to men by his divine Son our most blessed Saviour and Lawgiver: I ought, I say, to entreat their pardon for attempting to write an Apology for the truth of the Gospel in the present meridian of Christianity, which has stood its ground so many Ages in this European Quarter of the World: But the infection of Scepticism having at last got to a head, and engendred a new and raging contagion, namely, of calling the very fundamental and essential Articles of our most holy Faith in doubt, nay, and, as it were, of triumphing too under a stupid presumption that we are not able to make good the very foundation it self, that is, that we cannot furnish the Faithful with arguments

gements clear and strong enough to baffle and confute the whole *posse* of their opposition against it; I say, since this is the case, every head and hand should exert it self in the defence of God, of his Christ, and of his most holy Religion, and publish to the whole world the grounds of his belief, and of his immovable perseverance in that divine Faith which he has chosen with mature, disinterested and impartial consideration: that *others seeing this his good work*, may, by their mutual helps, be edify'd and animated with a rational confidence to acknowledge and confess God, his Christ, and that blessed Religion he has founded amongst men, and by this means to *glo-* Matt. v.  
*rify their Father which is in heaven.* 16.

Before I shut up this preliminary Essay, I cannot help observing, how thick a cloud of darkness has overtaken these presumptuous scoffers at our most holy profession, and how strongly bent they are, at any rate, to pursue their wicked designs against Truth, that they are not ashame'd even to endeavour to reason away that very essential privilege and property of Reason it self, *Liberty* I mean; *Liberty*, I say, for the support

support of which so many rivers of blood have flow'd in all quarters of the world; and in particular, we of this happy Isle esteem our selves of all nations the most fortunate, for that full enjoyment we have of it. I mention this particular from a great concern I was lately seiz'd with, when being in a Bookseller's Shop, I there saw on a table a small Pamphlet, the purpose of which was, as much as I cou'd collect from a cursory perusal of it, to contend, that Man is not really free, or that an absolute choice of acting or not acting, is not in his power; and consequently, that whatever he does, he is necessitated to do it ; and whatever he does not, he cannot help not doing it. The initial letters put for the Author's name, were *A. C.* with the addition of *Eſq;* The performance seem'd to me to be a very abſtruse and intricate one, and not easily to be understood ; at best, a dark one, and fit only for such a work of darkness. I did not indeed take the pains to read the pamphlet with any application ; because I think the blessing of liberty is so experimentally felt by every one, and so universally acknowledged

ledged by all men, that the very restraints of human laws are of no force, are but so many words, without it.

But as *Zeno* demonstrated motion, in a dispute about it, by suddenly starting from his seat, so I can shew *A. C. Eisq;* how he may demonstrate to himself his own liberty. When unhappily any thoughts or arguments occur to him against Liberty or Religion, let him but stop his pen from committing them to writing when he has a desire to do it, and this will be a clear evidence to him of his liberty. I hope he will not say his thoughts necessarily force his hand to write, or his tongue to speak: if this were the case of mankind, there are few countries that would not over-abound with gibbets, quarrels, confusion, &c. I do not therefore think such compositions against the natural liberty of man, deserve or require a further answer to be given, than what I have now given. Let such affecters of singularity in thinking, and writing, puzzle and confound themselves as much as they please, by abstruse and far-fetch'd definitions and conceptions concerning the notion of liberty: where the matter

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## Arguments *in Proof of*

is so plain and intimately felt, Zeno's method of answering is the clearest and most demonstrative: we feel it, we put it in practise each moment of our lives; and these quibblers themselves would make a heavy outcry, should a law be attempted to be made, prohibiting them, under the most acute punishments, to write against Liberty and Religion, as striking at the root of the precious liberty of the Subject. (I wish the abuse some of their friends make of their liberty in their irreverent and unmannerly, even ungentleman-like licentiousness of writing against Religion, may not at last occasion some attempt to be set on foot to restrain the liberty of the Press, which would be an unhappy punishment of the abuse of liberty. \* Let all men have an unbounded freedom to express their sentiments for or against Religion; but let their words and writings stand clear of any scurrilous reflection, sneer or sarcasm against it, or let the Author be severely chastis'd by publick authority, as a breach of the publick peace.) I do

\* Our Law does not suffer our persons or characters to be insulted, and why should it suffer our Religion by Law established to be insulted?

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not know what notion these men form to themselves of Liberty; I have no other notion of it than this (and I believe I have the consent of all men with me) that before I do any thing that I call free, I have full power to do, or not to do it, at my choice. This is a true and natural idea of Liberty; this is all that we understand by it; this every man feels within himself; and this is sufficient to discern between good and bad actions, good and bad men from one another, and for all the purposes of Religion towards God, and of Government amongst men.

I proceed now to the work I have undertaken, which is, by a scale of truths contained in so many propositions, to mount up by degrees, as by so many steps, to that great and blessed truth, wherein the whole race of mankind is so highly concern'd, namely, the Coming of Jesus Christ, his Suffering, Death and Resurrection, for the salvation of all men. And my method is this; To prove,

*1st.* That God made the world. That neither matter, nor its various compounds, could be of themselves, nor by chance.

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*2dly.* That

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*2dly.* That the System of God's creation of the world, as delivered by *Moses*, is, first, consonant to reason; and secondly, that it bears these three characters of truth, *viz.* *Chronology*, *Chorography*, and the *Peopling of the world* after it was created; and consequently that the Books of *Moses* contain real, and not fabulous, accounts of the things therein deliver'd, and deserve our belief of them.

*3dly.* That it is possible for God to reveal himself and his will to man in a more particular manner than is known to us by his works, or by the pure light of nature.

*4thly.* That the Books of the Old Testament contain an express revelation of God himself, and of his will, to the *Jews*, and certain prophecies also concerning future events, which were literally fulfill'd in their proper time.

*5thly.* That the obscurity of Style observable in those Books, is no objection against their credibility: that the said Books

Books make use of Types, to signify beforehand certain things to come; and that this method of prediction has also its proper use and effect.

*6thly.* That the said Books contain several prophecies concerning the birth and actions of some Person that was to appear among the *Jews* for the good of the whole world: And that these prophecies were literally fulfilled in our blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ, and in no other.

*7thly.* That the Canonical Books of the New Testament are genuine, and deliver a true historical account of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ's birth, his miracles, doctrines, suffering, death and resurrection, according as had been foretold in the aforesaid prophecies.

*8thly.* That the establishment and continual progress of Christ's Religion under the most raging persecutions, and its prevalence over the idolatry of the Heathen world, and over the wicked powers of evil spirits, by imposing an absolute silence

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on their oracles, so as to become not only the establish'd Religion of the *Roman Empire*, but to flourish in almost all other parts of the world, is an evident sign of its being the certain work of God himself, and of its being in a special manner under the care of his divine providence; and consequently that the Christian Religion, such as it is believ'd and taught by its true professors, was truly a divine Revelation of God himself, and of his divine will to men, by his only begotten Son Jesus Christ.



C H A P.

## C H A P. II.

*God made the Universe: Neither Matter,  
nor its various Compounds, could be of  
themselves, nor by chance.*

**I**T is generally presum'd at this time, and taken for granted, that, by the means of our late experimental Philosophy, and the labours of some modern Mathematicians, Atheism and the old Systems of the fortuitous and atomical Philosophy are so exploded and out of countenance, that all men universally, of what character or conduct of life soever, seem readily to acknowledge the *Being of an Eternal and Almighty God*, and that the Universe is the sole effect of his *infinite Power*. And I heartily wish this consent and acknowledgment be as real and solid, as it is pretended to be; and not rather a pure effect of mode and fashion, especially in such men who will not take the pains to examine into the foundation of religious truths; and yet

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will blindly and willingly submit themselves to the guidance of those men, who give themselves an air of doubting of every thing, and will not receive any truth, but what comes to them supported with such Arguments, as they themselves are pleas'd to think sufficient. At this rate, setting themselves up for such a court of judicature, as will certainly condemn and discard whatever does not suit with those principles they, of their own authority, have laid down for the tryal and test of all truths and doctrines.

We may therefore justly suspect, that such men (taking also their leaders into the number) are not sincerely convinc'd of God's eternal and almighty Being, and of his Architecture of this mighty fabrick of the Universe, more especially as they often drop broad hints, that tho' the world, and what is in it, could not at once start into being, and into that most perfect order we see it, either of it self or by chance; yet that after it was once form'd, the First Mover (for ought they see) put it out of his hands, and left it to it self to continue, move on and propagate each its kind: till by degrees be-  
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ing exhausted or falling to decay, it might at length tumble into a sort of primitive *Chaos*, or be resum'd by the Almighty Architect himself, to be repair'd and restor'd to its former condition. So that after the first formation of the world, according to these men, God became, with regard to his Creation, a mere inactive, indolent spectator, void of all care and concern what becomes of it. And in particular, that men, like animate and inanimate things, are not at all under the inspection of his providential eye; but are at ease, exempt from all check or controul, except such only as political laws or a superior force lays upon them.

Can such men truly be said to acknowledge the *existence of God as the Maker of all things*, and yet reason so loosely of matters of equal importance and certainty with his divine Being? Can they assert his *infinite Power*, and yet insinuate as if that Power (for ought they see) ever since the first Creation, has continu'd slothful and void of action? Can his *Wisdom* and *Knowledge* be likewise infinite, and yet careless and improvident, and altogether unconcern'd what is done here below,

even by those his creatures whom he has endu'd with Reason and Knowledge? Or can his *Goodness* and *Justice* be most pure and perfect, without establishing any discernible methods for the encouragement of virtue, and the discountenancing of lawless and dissolute men? As for my part, let such men put on what modish countenance they please, I cannot be persuaded they express the real sentiments of their hearts, when they make a shew of owning the existence of God, and his being the great *Fountain* and *Author* of all things.

The notion of a *Self-existent and Almighty Creator and Lord of all things*, is so inconsistent with that of a mere indifferent, regardless Beholder of the great work he has accomplish'd, and must of necessity be subject to his power; the essential difference betwixt *good* and *evil* is so incompatible with a blind, promiscuous and fortuitous participation of happiness or misery, that it is not possible any one can really and honestly be convinc'd of the one, but he must necessarily disclaim the other: that is, if God is the Author of all things, he certainly does

does superintend and govern the same all things : if the difference betwixt good and evil is necessary and essential, as he is a *wise* and a *just Governor*, he cannot but, in some due proportion, encourage and reward good men, and discourage and punish the wicked. But my present undertaking does not engage me, in this place, to discuss this important Article, *how essentially inseparable God's creation of the world is from his providential government of it*, especially with regard to his rational creatures, according to the good or bad use they make of the powers committed to them. My purpose, in what I have suggested above, is only, as it were by the way, to put the matter home to these pretenders to more than ordinary knowledge and penetration, to request of them to enter seriously into themselves, and search their most secret thoughts, whether in very deed they are not chiefly intent on finding out ways to \*elude and

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\* I wou'd not here be understood to insinuate, that all the modern Scepticks touching the Christian Religion are men of pleasure or Libertines, as to their manner of life : but only, that men of loose lives lay hold of their cavils against the Christian Religion, to despise and throw off all regard to Religion in general, or principles of Sobriety

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cavil away the divine power and rule over them, and root up all the fences against vice, rather than to acknowledge, revere and adore God's infinite power and goodness, and to learn and know what obligations they may lie under to so glorious a Creator and Governor.

As to the late improvements in Experimental Philosophy, and the labours of some modern Mathematicians above taken notice of; I confess, I have not seen that they have hitherto contributed any thing to the real interest or advancement of Religion. It is rather more to be fear'd, that they have given too quick an edge to mens curiosity, and by that means have taken off their necessary regard and concern for solid piety and devotion. It is of little consequence to be continually employ'd in gazing up to and measuring the bulk, the distances, and other such like curious discoveries of the celestial Bodies, if our thoughts and hearts are bounded there, and do not penetrate to

briety (as it happened among the Philosophers of old in the case of Epicurus) more especially as none of the modern Scepticks have given the world a particular System of their own Religion, nor attempted to suggest how a life of virtue is to be rewarded, or wickedness effectually punished.

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the throne of grace and of divine Majesty, and carry thither our awful enquiries to terminate in the true knowledge, adoration and love of that most excellent Being, who is the Author of those wonderful spheres, and of that surprizing harmony in the whole system of Nature we so much admire: and moreover, if we do not cut out a certain portion of time to spend daily in fervent addresses to him, to implore a blessing upon our studies and enquiries, that we may direct them to his glory, and to the promoting of the true knowledge of his divine Nature, and of his Will, that both we and all men may not only know what it is he requires of us in order to his honour, worship and service, but may honestly fulfil it. *Thomas a Kempis* says very well; l. i. c. 2.  
*Better is an humble Labourer, who serves God, than a proud Philosopher, who, neglectful of his duty to God, is wholly taken up in studying the course of the heavens. Do not (says he) thirst after too much Knowledge (unnecessary, mere, curious knowledge) because that is apt to beguile away thy thoughts from what is truly useful*

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ful and profitable, and often into errors  
mistaken for knowledge.

But has Atheism never been solidly confuted, and absolutely put to silence, before our late improvements in the science of Mathematicks? Are we to compute the number of the Stars, are the Planets and their Attendants, and their natural intercourses and influence on our Atmosphere and Terraqueous Globe, to be first accurately known before the existence of one supreme Being can be sufficiently made manifest to our minds? Are the laws of gravitation to be ascertain'd? (are they more clearly ascertain'd than formerly?) Is the cause of the Ebb and Flow of the *great Deep* to be certainly found out, or men may be left to themselves to entertain what doubts, and form what systems they please concerning the creation of the universe, or the original cause of it? If this be the case, what must we judge of ignorant men, and of those also who are competently vers'd in other kinds of literature, but without any particular taste for the Mathematicks? Surely, if this be the case,  
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their notion of the Deity can be but a very dark, at best but an imperfect one, and founded rather on presumption, than a true conviction.

But I wou'd not here be understood as endeavouring to carp at the fame and reputation of that excellent science, or to detract from its great usefulness in multiplying the evidences of an all-wise Being, the Creator and Governor of the universe. My only design in writing the foregoing lines, is rather to animadvert on the abuse some men make of that noble science, ascribing to it the honour and whole benefit of knowledge or learning in general, and moreover, to assert and make good the authority of the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, *Rom. i. 19, 20.* that God has sufficiently made himself manifest unto men by the creation of the world, that is, by the manifold visible tokens and demonstrations of an Almighty and Divine Power, which appear illustrious and obvious to our senses in the annual and daily operations through the whole system of Nature. So that if any one there be that can harden himself against so evident and powerful a testimony

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mony and proof of God, and deny his eternal Power and Godhead, such a one is altogether *inexcusable*, and justly incurs the guilt of his extreme vengeance.

As therefore the belief and clear conviction of God's existence, and of his being the Creator of all things, is the foundation-stone and basis of all Religion; and as a competent knowledge of the Mathemicks is hard to be attained but by very few, the method here above suggested by the Apostle of demonstrating the divine *Being* of God, and of his formation of the universe, as it is the most sensible and obvious, I chuse the rather to insist upon it, and moreover, because I think is as plain and strong as any other method whatsoever. But before I enter upon the Argument, I think it may be proper to observe,

1st. That the Author of nature has deeply impress'd on the mind of man a certain instinct or bent, whereby he is naturally inclin'd or mov'd to acknowledge, that there is some all-powerful and original cause of himself, and of all other created things; and to stand in a

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reverential awe of his infinite Majesty, and moreover which gives him to know, without the help of teaching or art, that in many cases of his wants wherein the power and skill of men are utterly insufficient, God alone is capable of affording relief. It was very pertinently observed of the *Romans* concerning the force of this natural instinct, that *when any sudden mischance befel even the more rude and ignorant among the Romans, they did not lift up their eyes and hands towards the Capitol, but towards Heaven, for immediate help.* And Cicero affirms, that there is not a People any where to be found so barbarous and ignorant, as to their choice of what kind of divinity they are to worship, but universally agree, that some divinity is to be worshipped.

See Tertull. Apo-  
log. c. 17.  
& lib. de  
testim.  
*Animæ!*

Some, I know, there are, that will not admit of any term that has not a distinct and perfect idea attach'd to it; such as some determinate thing represented by it to the mind: and consequently they look upon this term *instinct* (like *occult qualities*) as a word that signifies nothing, because we cannot affix any thing which that term can properly signify to our mind.

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But how difficult soever it may be to explain or describe particularly what is meant by such terms, yet, by certain effects which we constantly observe to proceed from such things in the same circumstances, we certainly know they must be the effects of some cause, though we are ignorant of it (and is not our mind infinitely ignorant?). And therefore in reality such terms offer at no more than to signify a relation betwixt a thing and an effect, of which relation we cannot give a clear account. And thus it is in the present case ; we cannot distinctly and philosophically describe what this *instinct* is above spoken of ; and yet we cannot reject it. For to what else can we attribute that tender and provident care and concern all parent animals, even of the most savage kind, have for their young ones, and only whilst they are young ? How busy and sollicitous do they appear in nursing and breeding up their helpless little ones? What hazards will they not often run in their defence, and for fear of being depriv'd of them? And yet when they are grown up, and able to provide for themselves, how sud-

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denly is all this tenderness and concern for them vanish'd away and forgotten? There is no other way of accounting for this surprizing effect in nature, but this; That the Wise Author of Nature impress'd on all Animals this *instinct* (or this something, call it what you please, of which we have no distinct idea) for the preservation of the several Species of his Creatures, and the continuing on a lasting series of Beings, to be subservient to those purposes God originally intended when he laid the foundation of the earth. And Man being indu'd with a rational mind, on purpose that he shou'd know and acknowledge his absolute dependence on God, both for his being, his continuance in it, and for all the comforts of life; and, in return, to render his Creator a just tribute of acknowledgment, service, and worship, I do not see any impropriety in saying, that God interwove into his very nature an instinct or bias, (tho' we cannot distinctly account for it) strongly moving him to acknowledge whose handy-work he is, on whom he absolutely depends, and whom he is reverentially to fear,

honour, and worship. As to the effect it self, namely, the universal consent concerning the being of God; that is visible in every Tribe and Family throughout the whole Race of Men. And where such an uninterrupted harmony of sentiment runs through the whole, whence can this take it's rise, but from nature itself? And this is all we understand by the term *Instinct*, and no more needs be said concerning it. I proceed therefore to observe,

2dly. That such is the condition of mankind, that a far greater part is almost continually bow'd down to labour, and therefore for the most part ignorant and unthinking. That another considerable part also, through their own fault, abandon themselves to pleasure, and therefore give little heed to any thing, but what has a tendency that way. It cannot therefore seem strange, if neither of these kinds of men apply any attention to the visible Demonstrations of himself God has set before our eyes, or receive any benefit from them, by confessing his eternal Power and Godhead,  
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and his divine Providence, and by rendering him that obedience and reasonable worship that is due to him from them. But this unhappy default of a heedless and wicked generation, is no argument, that the plain proofs God has plentifully given of himself are any way insufficient in themselves, to point out to them who must be the Author and Giver of those manifold blessings and comforts they enjoy ; on whom they depend for the continuance of them, and to whom they ought to return a just and grateful tribute of religious honour and service.

*3dly.* I observe, that besides the *Instinct* above spoken of, it is obvious to suppose and conceive, that the divine Author of Nature inspir'd into the proto-parent of our Species, a clear and powerful knowledge of himself as such, with an injunction to propagate this knowledge through all generations to come, or that were to descend from him. And that this also may be conceiv'd to be another reason of that universal consent among all Nations concerning a general

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(tho' many times but very imperfect) notion of the Existence of God as the Cause, Maker and Governor of all things.

From these observations, I come now directly to the Argument propos'd in the title of this second Chapter, which is by a natural, plain, and easy Method, to demonstrate that *God is the sole Original Cause, and Creator of the Universe, that is, of heaven and earth, and of all that is therein*: *That neither matter itself, nor its various compounds, cou'd be of themselves, or by Chance.* And the method I propose is this:

Every one, that will observe and think at all of this matter, may, from his own Existence, thus naturally reason with himself: The Being, I feel myself to have, is not so mine own, that I am not oblig'd to some other Being for it. I owe it evidently to my Parents, (whoever they are) as I daily see others do. And my Parents being perfectly of the same nature with myself, as to all the properties and infirmities of it, they likewise must necessarily have been brought into being after the same manner as I

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myself was. And this in consequence must necessarily be concluded to have been the case of all our Progenitors, for the same reason as I concluded of myself; 'till by a retrogression, or computing the Generations before us, we ascend upwards to some first Being, who either was the first of our Progeny, and was self-existent, or was produc'd by some other superior Cause; and this again either itself self-existent, or produc'd by some other superior Cause; and so on, 'till we arrive at some one first original Cause, which cou'd not be the product of any other Cause; and consequently must be in its own nature necessary and self-existent.

That the first of our Progenitors cou'd not be self-existent, is hence very evident, that if he was like the rest of his Posterity, he must have had but the same frail, impotent nature, we ourselves have: and consequently, as it was impossible for us to be without our Parents, so was it also impossible that our Primogenitor shou'd have come into life without the help of some other cause to form his body, and breathe into it a spirit of life,

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such as we experience in ourselves. And further, our Progenitor cou'd not be self-existent; because whatever is self-existent, or derives his Being from no other Cause, must, in the nature of the thing, so exist, as that it is absolutely impossible, nay, a contradiction, for him not to exist: As is evident from hence, that such a self-existence can only be founded on necessity, or that such an existence is in itself absolutely necessary, and therefore impossible, and a contradiction not to be; for a necessity of Being, and not being, are contradictory the one to the other, and therefore impossible.

But it may be reply'd, that there may be a kind of necessity of existence, which does not infer an eternity of existence, nor an impossibility of non-existence at all times; and consequently a Being may exist in time, and without being in its own nature absolutely necessary. To this I answer; That absolute (and there can be no other) *necessity* and *contingence* are, in themselves, contradictory; and cannot be predicated or spoken of the same thing. Every one knows, that whatever comes to pass by accident, or that might not have

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come to pass, is contradictorily opposite to that which necessarily comes, or cou'd not but have come to pass. And consequently whatever necessarily exists as a Being, must be always so without beginning or ending. For let us, for instance, suppose some moment in eternity (for an eternity there must be, either of something or nothing; but there cannot be an eternity of nothing, because we exist ourselves: I say, let us therefore suppose some moment in eternity) that such a necessary Being was not: What cou'd determine or cause it to be in the next, or any after-moments? Shall we call upon *chance* for this great work? A senseless cause this. But more of it by and by. Shall we say it was *necessary* in the second moment, (for if *chance* is not the cause, it must be *necessary*) and not in the first? But here again recurs the same question, what can be the reason of its being *necessary* in the second moment, rather than in the first? Evident therefore it is, that *necessity of existence* can be the only reason, or (if we may be allow'd the expression) the only cause of *necessary existence*. And consequently, whatever

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is by *necessity*, must be, cannot but be eternal, and absolutely independent and *self-existent*, as existing only by the necessity of its nature. Now that our Protoparent cou'd not be such a necessary and independent Being, is every way most manifest; not only because our nature or compound itself is in itself finite and dependent, both for its very existence and continuance in it, but moreover, because all other things without us, have no such essential relation to or dependence on us, as that they might not exist or subsist without us, or as tho' we never had been. Nothing therefore in conclusion can be more clear and certain, than that not one of our human Race (and this argument will hold as strong, in a due proportion, when apply'd to any other part of the Creation: I say, nothing can be more clear and certain than this truth, that not one of our human Race) can, in its own nature, be either necessary, absolutely independent, or self-existent. That we are therefore, and whatever we are, we must own ourselves to be the effect or work of some superior Agent; and this, by a gradual ascent, we must at length con-

clude

clude to be from some first original cause, which must be a necessary and self-existent Being; and this we denote by the term *God*.

This argument, plain and clear as it is, may, notwithstanding, be puzzl'd with some quirks and subtilties of crafty men: for instance, some may say, How can it be prov'd, that a successive series of men may not be infinite or eternal, and without a beginning or first of the series? for whatever is eternal in such a retrogression, can have no beginning. *Answer:* It is not possible for a finite capacity, such as ours is, to form a true, or any adequate notion of such an infinite series, or competently to conceive, how an infinite and eternal power can exert itself, in a production of such an infinite and eternal successive order of creatures: And therefore it wou'd be very absurd to presume on any thing beyond the reach of nature; or, because we cannot attain any knowledge of it, to pronounce it impossible, or indeed to make any enquiries about it. What properly concerns us is, to keep ourselves within our own sphere of thought, and not to make an impossible attempt

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to step beyond it. It cannot therefore be requir'd of me to engage in an useles and absurd dispute, to disprove the possi- bility or impossibility of such an infinite and eternal series, which is as impossible for us to reason upon, as the number of grains of sand on the sea shore. And suppose at last, through our bounded fa- culties of thought, we are oblig'd to con- fess, that we cannot absolutely demon- strate the impossibility of such a series; nay, suppose we pass it as merely possible, do's this prove it to be fact? This is con- trary to the known axiom, *a posse, a* *actum non valet consequentia*; that is, the possibility of any thing, do's not prove an actual existence of it.

Rom.  
c. xii. 3.

I confess, I think the Apostle's ad- vice very applicable to this case, *that none* *us presume to think above what he ought* *to think*; that is, that we ought to confine the subject of our thoughts within the power we have of thinking. And this being bounded and finite, whatever we conceive to be infinite, we are to look upon it as extended beyond our narrow limits of thought and comprehension, and therefore impossible for us to form any

just and adequate conceptions of it as such. And certainly it is more natural and suitable to our way of thinking to conceive, that whatever is finite in itself, is every way finite, I mean as well in number and order, as power and capacity. Even the eternity we aspire to of duration, however it may never have an end, yet what is actually past will always be finite, that is, it will always have a beginning and ending, it will always constitute a finite period of duration. And can there be a more extravagant and inconceiveable supposition to our way of thinking, than such an infinite eternal retrograde series of men? But how puzzling soever it may be to give a clear and direct solution to the difficulty now before us, the Sophism will easily appear and disappear, when brought to the test of *necessity* and *self-existency*. For whatever has no beginning from its own nature, must be absolutely necessary and self-existent of itself, as has been demonstrated above. Now it is evident from our very nature itself, that it is neither absolutely necessary nor self-existent, as has been likewise demonstrated. Therefore such an infinite and eternal Se-

ries as is propos'd in the Query above, is absolutely impossible. If any one will say, that God from all eternity created the first of the series, (if I may be allow'd to speak so, for in such a case all our thoughts and words are lost, and really have no signification at all) and that from the first of that Series proceeded an infinite and eternal Series of men; I will not contend against it, for reasons alledg'd above (in the former part of this answer), and the rather, because this confirms the argument which I am endeavouring to render demonstrative, *viz.* that there is one supreme Being necessarily and self-existent, and which is the original cause of all others.

This same form of reasoning, which, from our own existence, carries us up to the Fountain and first Cause of ourselves, may be made use of with equal force and evidence to direct us to the Creator of the universe. In effect, whatever is necessarily and self-existent, cannot but be infinite, eternal, immense, containing in itself all possible perfections, and the Creator and original cause of all other things. For what is there that can determine or set any bounds to such a necessarily

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and self-existent Being ? and where no bounds can be set, all must be infinite in the most absolute and comprehensive import of that term. And again, as there is no other Being necessarily self-existent, whatever exists must necessarily be produc'd, at least as by the first Cause, by that supreme self-existent Being. I say, *as there is no other Being necessarily and self-existent* : for it is beyond all contradiction evident that there can be but one such, as manifestly will appear from the argument above insisted on. For as it takes its rise from ourselves, and from the things we see without us, there can be no necessity of admitting two necessarily self-existent Beings in order to our own existence, or to that of any other part of the Universe.

*Query.* Are two necessarily self-existent Beings contradictory to and incompatible with one another ? *Answer.* Certainly they are : For I have here before demonstrated, that *necessary self-existence* essentially includes *infinite, immense, eternal, all perfect, &c.* Now either each of the two self-existent Beings have all the same identic Attributes and Properties

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## Arguments *in Proof of*

the other has, or it has not. If it has, then one is absolutely not necessary, or rather, it is the very self-same Being with the other; and consequently they are not two, but really one and the same thing. If one has not the same identic perfections the other has, then this cannot be *All perfect*, since it is deficient in some excellency or perfection which is in the other. Besides, how can two such Beings exist? in

There can not be two infinite Spaces, neither can two immense Beings fill and act in one infinite Space. what space? in what sphere of action? If within one another's, how absurd is this, and absolutely impossible? and does not this plainly argue one of them not to be necessary, and therefore a contradiction, as being suppos'd necessary, and yet is not necessary? Evident therefore it is, that there can be but *one* supreme necessarily self-existent Being, Creator and Governor of all things. And thus I hope I may conclude, that this *Climax* or progressive argument of beginning from ourselves, and from those that were before us, and as by so many steps of ascending up to the first Cause and Origin of all things, is both obvious, natural, plain, and evident to every capacity; and the more so, because it arises from ourselves.

Another noble argument to demonstrate that the mighty frame of the universe is the work of one supreme Agent, may be form'd from the contemplation of the *Host of Heaven*; for these very powerfully proclaim the glory of God by their constant, various, and yet regular laws of motion, and by their several influences on our inferior earth; by their stated courses and tracts appointed for them, and which they unchangeably observe; by their regular and proper Distances, so as not to interfere with, or perplex the one the other; by the glorious and almost divine powers of the sun, and the uninterrupted succession of the seasons of the year, brought about and renew'd by his annual and revolving course; from the infinite number and diversity of things on this our terraqueous Sphere; from the superior majesty of the huge and bulky spheres above, by a gradual descent to the minutest animals here below, that are imperceptible to our feeling, and invisible to our naked eye; and yet some of these we can observe by the help of microscopes, to have a seemingly quick motion, and consequently even they must

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must be cloathed with suitable nerves and muscles, so minute as hardly to be imagin'd ; from the infinite multiplicity, and variety (I had almost said differing species) of men, consisting of propensities, desires, ways of thinking, and complexions, not only not altogether alike, but greatly opposite to one another, and yet endu'd with a principle disposing, and, as it were, constraining them to unite into one common band of society, of interest, humour, and friendly commerce : Lastly, from the consideration of our little *Microcosm* itself, or little abridgement of the whole world within us, how *fearfully and wonderfully are we made ?* How divine and exceeding all thought the contrivance and texture of the whole ? How endless and past finding out the number of the greater to the minutest parts we consist of, of which our nicest *Anatomical* enquiries have not been able to discover the very thousandth part ? How strange and absolutely conceal'd from us the various springs of motion ? How unknown, even to our very selves, the manner *how we live, move, and make use of our very senses ?* Lastly, the very texture of

our outermost covering, tho' felt and seen, surpasses all our efforts and pains to arrive at any competent notion of it: I say, from the consideration of this endless diversity and multiplicity of creatures, each distinct and separate from all others, both as to its *being, nature, and particular office or business,* and yet each divinely conspiring to render the whole an harmonious and most perfect workmanship, each particular *Being,* tho' differing from, yet expressing a relation or proportion to all the rest: I say, what a surprizing and most excellent idea must not this contemplation raise in our minds! what an evident and feeling knowledge of God's infinite power and wisdom, and of his unity also, since if a multiplicity of Powers, and disparate from one another, had been concern'd in the production of the several parts of the Universe, this cou'd not but have caus'd great disorder, deformity, and irregularity through the whole?

And as an earnest and studious consideration of these several particulars, must necessarily imprint on our minds a thorough sense and conviction of the supreme

Being,

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Being, as the Author and Creator of all things, so will it also give us a clear and firm persuasion of his providential care and government of this his so mighty a Fabrick, which he has founded and finish'd with so much wisdom and contrivance ; and moreover, this consideration must likewise strike the serious contemplator of the divine works, with a most reverential esteem and acknowledgment of his infinite *goodness* and *holiness*, that, as our supreme Lord and Governor, he beholds with a propitious regard, and accepts the grateful tribute of honour and worship render'd unto him by his rational creatures, whom he has distinguish'd from all others, by ennobling them with a Principle or Prerogative of reason and knowledge, to discern and acknowledge the great blessings he has richly bestow'd upon them : That he cannot but be well pleas'd with, and amply recompense the virtuous conduct of those, who direct their lives and actions according to the dictates of that excellent and most singular Privilege ; and finally, that he cannot, on the contrary, but highly disapprove and resent

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the wicked ingratitude of those men, who impiously deny him the due return of honour and worship, and wilfully persist in a rebellious opposition to that knowledge of him and his laws, strongly impress'd on their minds ; and in consequence will, in due time, make them feel the tremendous smart of his chastizing hand.

What an amazing, and yet most entertaining theme for our study and meditation might not these several particulars, which I have accumulated together, and thrown into one common mass of thought, afford the pious contemplator of the divine works ? How powerful and striking an argument might not here be rais'd of God's infinite majesty, of his most excellent goodness, his divine justice, and of his fatherly providence over the whole Creation ? but more particularly over us, whom he regards not purely as his creatures, but his children too. But this wou'd be a subject too copious and extensive for my present design ; and therefore I will content myself with the proof of God's existence, as he is the supreme and original cause of all things,

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I have before enlarg'd upon; because, in effect, it is the basis and groundwork of all others, and is the most solid, necessary, and sufficient; and moreover, because the argument of a collective contemplation of the divine works, I have in general now recommended, has been with great accuracy, pains, and fulness treated and insisted on by many able Pens, whose compositions are every where to be met with.

The method I have pursu'd above to demonstrate the Being of God as the First Cause and Creator of all things, does with equal force and evidence confute and defeat the stupid notions of those Philosophers of old, who imagin'd, rather than prov'd, that *matter*, *water*, *fire*, *atoms*, or *chance* might be the real Cause of all things. For a very superficial reasoning on these particulars will suffice to evince, that not any of them can possibly be conceiv'd to be any Cause at all, either of themselves or of any thing else; not only on account of their innate slothfulness, inactivity, and utter incapacity to form such a system of nature we live in, and behold with such an

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awful regard and astonishment, but more especially from the notion of a *necessary self-existence*. And it is very probable, that those Antients meant no more than that the *Mind* or self-existent *Being* (which they characteriz'd by the term *mind* or *understanding*) made use of those particular materials, as ingredients to mix and frame the different kinds of creatures God intended to diversify the system of nature with. For it seems to be impossible to conceive, that they cou'd seriously imagine that either *matter*, *fire*, &c. cou'd be in themselves *necessary* and *self-existent*; and this must be suppos'd, otherwise a question will arise, how they themselves came into being? If they were created by some other Power, it will further be demanded, why that Power cou'd not as effectually have form'd the whole system of nature, as have given them their particular existence? I say, they cou'd not reason so absurdly, as to conceive that either *matter*, *water*, &c. cou'd be in themselves *necessary* and *self-existent*; for then it wou'd evidently follow, that they were each endu'd with all possible

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perfections, which they as evidently saw was quite otherwise.

But perhaps it may be said, that every thing is bounded by its own nature ; and consequently, a Being may be self-existent, and yet bounded as to its properties and perfections: *Answer.* But this is saying nothing at all : for there must be something besides its nature that thus confines its exigency, and makes it to be just what it is, and no more : and therefore there must be some prior Cause, some wise and contriving Power, (as in a lower instance we see in our Artists and Architects amongst us) that wills, and forms, and molds it to be just what we see it is. And what is this but God, the only self-existent Cause of all? As to *matter, water, fire, atoms, &c.* they are so far from producing any thing, or forming a spontaneous compound, or even a fortuitous one of themselves, that in their own nature they cannot move at all, but must necessarily ever be at rest, except when they are set in motion by some moving Power. And surely it must be a thought altogether unworthy of a rational mind to conceive, that such impotent and beggarly elements,

elements, subject to our very selves, can be the original cause of our selves, and of so divine a Fabrick, as is the Universe compacted together and finish'd with such infinite wisdom, beauty, and art. This is an argument so evident and visible to our senses, that it is a shame to human reason, that a contrary sentiment shou'd ever have been entertain'd by any one ennobl'd with it.

But surely nothing can be more absurd, than the setting up *Chance* for the mighty Cause of the Universe, an *accident* for the cause of *substance*, *nothing* for the real cause of an actual *Being*. For in effect, what is *Chance* more than an *Ens rationis*, a meer name, that subsists no where but in the imagination? If we contemplate the work of the Creation in general, and the regular course of nature, nothing happens but through an orderly series and dependent connection of causes and their effects, design'd and establish'd by the infinitely wise Author of Nature, the effects being always suitable and proportionate to the nature and powers of their causes, tho' this many times is invisible and unknown to us. There are

indeed many things which depend on the exercise of our free choice ; and in these cases, according to the vulgar way of accounting for certain facts, we may allow some events to be brought about by a kind of Chance. To render my meaning intelligible, I will trouble the Reader with an instance, which may be understood of many others. A Man, to try the nature of the soil of a field he has just bought, strikes his spade into the ground, and lights upon a box of old gold coin. This may properly be styl'd a kind of chance ; for the whole field was alike to the purpose of the new purchaser. He might as well, for ought he knew, have open'd another part of the field : but however, as some particular place he was to pitch upon, and intended that only in general, he luckily, but freely, tho' blindly as to the good hap, happen'd to open the spot of ground where the treasure lay. This we commonly say, *fell out by chance* ; and I know no better way of expressing it ; but by this we do not intend, that *Chance* was any real cause of this discovery, or that it had or cou'd have any real influence

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on the digger's mind or hand. All therefore we really mean by such an expression, is, that we cannot account for such events; and consequently, to say a thing happens by chance, is in a vulgar, but improper manner, to say, we can give no reason how or why it so happen'd.

But as to the formation, or general government of the course of Nature, it is a manifest absurdity to imagine *Chance* to be the real cause either of the one or the other. For a positive and real effect must necessarily proceed from a positive and real cause; and in this case the known Adagium in Philosophy has its full force, *ex nihilo, nihil fit*; a thing that is not, cannot be the cause of a thing that is. But if so noble and infinite a bulk of Architecture, as is the Universe, cou'd once have happen'd to be perfected by blind Chance, why might it not long ago have happen'd by a like Chance to have molder'd away into its Primitive Chaos and Nothing? or why all this while might not some other new surprizing machine of curious workmanship have started up in the wide expansion of the heavens above us. But I have

dwell too long on so idle a subject. However, from such absurd notions and groundless positions as these are, we may learn this lesson, That men fond of novelties, and of appearing singular in their opinions, will not stick at any thing, how strange and extravagant soever, which feeds an idle vanity of thwarting the common sentiments of mankind.



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## C H A P. III.

*The System of the Creation of the World, as deliver'd by Moses, is, 1st. Consonant to reason. 2dly. It bears these three evident characters of the truth of it, viz. 1st. A just Chronology. 2dly. True Chorography. 3dly. The Peopling of the World correspondent to it. And consequently the Books of Moses, with relation to these particulars, at least deserve our belief of, and assent to them.*

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## S E C T. I.

*A preliminary observation on the Antient Philosophers, Historians, and Poets.*

**I**N my way to the subject of this chapter, I wou'd lay before the Reader an observation, which may dispose him to a more favourable attention to what I have to offer on the subject of this chapter. And the observation is this: that whatever the Antient Philosophers, whether among the Greeks, or

others, have confusedly guess'd at (for their systematic writings deserve no better a name), concerning the formation of the world, and whatever account of historic facts and events their writers of history and Poets have given us of the first Ages, even as far as a mixture of blind tradition and fable cou'd carry them, not one of them has attempted to give a clear, succinct, and rational account *how* and *when* the world was made ; *how, where,* and *when* the first Inhabitants and Colonies were planted ; and after what manner the *Race of men* became spread over the whole face of the earth.

As to the Philosophers, they were chiefly taken up in prying into nature as form'd into a system, and finding out *whether* the Philo- and *how* the things we see were molded sophers, collected and temper'd with these four ingredients, with great pains. *earth, water, air, and fire;* and how each of these in the several mixt and compound Bodies had a predominant power : and further, to reduce and attribute all effects from pag. 3. to 34. and events to their proper causes. Some few of them endeavcur'd (but very unsuccessfully) to penetrate to the first beginning of the World, of Mankind, Animals,

*See the ancient systems of the Philosophers, collected with great pains.*

*Univers. Hist. now begun to be published, N<sup>o</sup>. I.*

*See Diod. Sic. l. i. pag. 6.*

mals, &c. or to trace this so far, as to discover whether they had any beginning at all. And this difficult point threw them into a great diversity of opinions. Some wou'd have the World to be in its own nature necessary and eternal; others, only so as a necessary effect of a supreme (but as to this) necessary Cause: others again maintain'd, that Atoms only were necessary and eternal of themselves, and that the present world, with all that is in it, was a meer casual undefign'd system, form'd into the present nature and constitution we see it in, by a meer fortuitous gathering and cementing together of the said Atoms; while others affirm'd, that the first Cause, or some intelligent Being, gave the productive motion to the chaos or mist of Atoms, in order to the production and formation of the mighty work of nature. As to the particular species of mankind, some were likewise of an opinion that it was without a beginning, and that we are descended from an eternal succession of generations: some, that it was finite as to its duration, and proceeded from some one first Primogenitor: and among these latter, there were

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that suppos'd the first of the whole Race to have sprung from a fortuitous conglomeration and concatenation of Atoms: others conceiv'd some superior Agent to have given that particular productive turn to those small particles to work out a human Being: others wou'd have it that the first man was a meer product of the slime of the earth, &c. Indeed they were so confus'd (and no wonder) in their notions concerning these matters, so various and inconstant, asserting at one time what they rejected at another, that 'tis next to impossible to form any notion of what they held and taught concerning these things: nevertheless, we cannot but own that by the force of an excellent Genius and continu'd labour, they made a surprizing proficiency in this kind of knowledge. But then it appears from hence very manifest, how little they were able to turn their thoughts to consider particularly, *how or by what excellent Power* those things that were the objects of their study were first made, or by what succession of causes they were brought into *being*; and how many Ages and Generations of men had run out and been spent from

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the first beginning of *Nature's works*; or how and by what particular Progenitors the Inhabitants of the Earth became every where dispers'd and rang'd into Families, Kindreds, Societies, and Nations, and even from what original stock they themselves claim'd their descent.

Neither do their compilers of historical events furnish us with any greater light as to these particulars. Their chief study was to collect and record the Origin of Empires and Kingdoms, according to the memoirs, traditional reports, and national registers they were able to procure; to describe the principal events of each under their respective Governors; and so to work out a chain or continu'd series of political and other occurrences, through a succession of states and generations of men, to the time when they concluded their Narratives. This was all they endeavour'd, and it was all they were able to perform. And tho' we must own the great usefulness of these performances, for the sake of that satisfaction they give us, of seeing the Scripture history keep almost even pace with them as high as they go, and contain a plain agreement with them as

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to the facts mention'd both by the sacred context and prophane writers ; yet even these leave us in an utter darkness, with regard to the first Ages and Generations of men, down to the Epoch whence their histories are dated. And moreover, we cannot but lament their credulous weakness or great disingenuity in blending their narrations with a base medley of things, which neither they themselves cou'd give credit to, nor cou'd they imagine that those who shou'd after peruse their works wou'd make any other account of them, than as fabulous inventions, or idle stories, lightly taken up to enlarge the bulk of their history.

As to their Poets; their chief talent lay in entertaining and pleasing their Auditors with an harmonious jingle of words and sounds, embellish'd with a surprizing and beautiful diversity of most elegant and artful inventions and descriptions of places and things, of romantick achievements and adventures of their nick-nam'd Gods, Heroes, and others, which were the product chiefly of an exuberant and luxuriant imagination ; wherein truth had little or no other share than the names them-

themselves; and sometimes scarce even that. And indeed, what more cou'd be expected from these writers, without the help of authentic and sufficient Records? And how cou'd these be thought on or registred, while men were yet, as it were, rude and unpolish'd, their minds uncultivated by experience, and the knowledge of Arts and Sciences, and before the very first lines and rudiments of these were hardly laid, men being, in the more early Ages, chiefly taken up in providing for themselves simple food and raiment, and in the pursuit and choice of convenient settlements for themselves and their posterity; and principally, when a general *deluge* had, with a general devastation of all things, as it were, wash'd away all knowledge and footsteps of the former Inhabitants of the Earth?

Hence the first information of human affairs and records we have from the extra-Jewish Writers, namely, the *Babylonians*, *Chaldeans*, and *Ægyptians*, (who laid the first foundation of the sciences and records) is so dark, imperfect, and of a very late and uncertain Epoch: (I take no notice of their meer fabulous and extravagant

Arguments *in Proof of*

travagant imaginations, of an eternity or myriads of years of their Chronology suppos'd by them) hence the unbounded privilege assum'd by the Poets, of dressing up what fabulous systems and narrations they pleas'd concerning the Genealogy of the Gods, of their Semi-Gods, and of other men greatly beneficial to their subjects or fellow-citizens : and hence lastly, a vain presumption taken up by some Nations of arrogating to themselves what Antiquity of Original they thought fit: thus the *Athenians* styl'd themselves Ἀυτόχθονες, or of equal duration in their descent with, or sprung from the Earth itself: the *Arcadians* boasted themselves to be Προστάλλοντες; that is, whose Progenitors pre-existed before the moon. Whence

*Life of  
Thef. init.  
new edit.*

*Plutarch*, in his life of *Theseus*, justly observes, that " as Historians, in their " Geographical descriptions of countries, " crowd into the farthest parts of their " maps those places that escape their " knowledge, with some such remarks in " the margin as these, *All beyond is no-  
thing but dry and desert sands, inha-  
bited only by wild creatures; or dark  
impassable Bogs, or Scythian cold, or  
frozen*

“frozen Sea. So I may very well say  
“of those facts of history that are farther  
“off, (the time of Theseus) *All beyond is*  
“*nothing but monstrous and tragical ficti-*  
“*ons.* There the Poets, and there the  
“inventors of fables dwell. Nor is there  
“to be expected any thing worthy of  
“credit, or that carries any appearance  
“of certainty.”

From this preliminary observation on the ignorance and utter incapacity of the abovesaid Heathen writers, to give any authentic or plausible account of the origin and formation of the world, and of the creation or bringing in of the first Parents of mankind, and the Peopling of the Earth with Inhabitants, according to their *Generations, Families, and Nations*, I proceed to consider the system of the world's creation, as deliver'd by *Moses*, in the following Section.

#### S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

*The System of the Creation of the World,  
as deliver'd by Moses, is consonant to  
reason.*

BY the *System of Moses*, I mean the *Cosmopœia* or *Hexameron*, i. e. the divine work of six days, contain'd in the first chapter of *Genesis*; and this only I undertake to prove, that it is consonant to reason. But before I enter upon this task, it may be expedient to answer a previous question that may be made, *viz.* Why God wou'd employ six days precisely, and not rather (suitably to the divine power) but one day, or one moment, to perfect the mighty work of creating heaven and earth? To this I answer, 1<sup>st</sup>. That it does not become us, who are the work of his hands, to put such a question; because as God is self-existent and absolutely free in his own nature, he can be under no necessity of creating any thing at all; and consequently, when he was pleas'd to create any thing, he was absolutely free to do it *when* and *after what manner* he should chuse. 2<sup>dly</sup>. It is evident

dent that infinite Power cou'd as easily have created heaven and earth (and as many others as might seem good to him) with a word only, and in an instant, as in a successive order of six days. *3dly.* The progressive creation of heaven and earth in the course of six days, does by no means argue or infer any defect of power in God ; but rather a free choice for some determinate end or purpose ; and therefore such a creation is neither contrary to any principle of reason, nor unworthy of a divine power. *4thly,* and principally, as the six days work of God, and his resting on the seventh, bears a relation to the commandment of God of keeping the seventh day holy, or appointing to men six days to be employ'd in bodily labour and business, but the seventh to be hallow'd or set apart as a day of rest from all worldly concerns, and to be dedicated to the worship of God only ; this suggests to us a competent and rational solution of the question above propos'd, namely, that God thus becoming himself (if I may be allow'd to say so) a divine example of six days labour, and resting from all his work on the seventh, might, with a greater

F effect,

*Arguments in Proof of*

effect, signify to mankind what tribute of duty he wou'd require of them, viz. one day in seven to be consecrated to his honour and solemn worship, and in abstinence from all business and labour of the body. I conceive this to be so plain, so rational, and satisfactory an answer to the question, that I am not aware of any well-grounded objection that can be form'd against it. I do not indeed remember that any particular instance of the observance of the sabbatical precept is mention'd in the book of *Genesis*. But this cannot be alledg'd as an argument, that a day of rest was not then so set apart by all true worshippers of God; because the account of the several matters, from the first creation down to the departure of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, is so very short, that not only this, but many other particulars also, have escap'd *Moses's* pen, which we carnot doubt but were done, and a common practice during that period. And moreover, this precept does not appear to be deliver'd on mount *Sinai* as a new institution, as may be gather'd from *Gen.* ii. 2. *Exod.* xvi. 23, 25. and xx. 11.

Another

Another thing previous to the chief subject of this Section worth our notice, is a singularity, in the method of drawing up and describing the particular facts, very remarkable in the books of *Moses*; and this is, that matters are frequently mention'd in general, and in an inverted order, before they were done; after which follows a particular description of them. So ver. 2. of the first ch. of *Genesis*, the *Earth and the waters* are mention'd separately and apart, before they were (created or) actually separated from one another. So the same also mention is made ver. 6. compare ver. 9. Again ver. 20. the *waters* are said to *bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl*; whereby it may seem as if the fishes of the sea and fowls of the air derive their being from the pregnancy of the waters. But to shew that this was not the meaning of *Moses*, the following verse 21. expresses it, that *God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, &c. and every winged fowl*. So ver. 24. it is said, *Let the Earth bring forth the living creature, cattle, creeping thing, beast, &c. all which, ver. 25. is*

said, *that God made the beast, the cattle, and every creeping thing, &c.* (See also and compare this method of *Moses*, chapters x. and xi. of this book of *Genesis*). So that in reading this first ch. of *Genesis*, (the same may be observ'd of the 10th, and others) we are not to apprehend the particulars, when first mention'd to be, as then in being, or done; for this wou'd render the context inconsistent with it self, unintelligible, and utterly defeat the intent of the writer himself; but we are to proceed to the passages where those particulars are distinctly describ'd, and according to their order, and by this rule chiefly to form a just notion of the writer's meaning; *quod nisi ex hac regulâ intelligatur, erratur* (says St. Austin) *sicut in Genesi, &c.* Having thus prepar'd the way,

de doctr.  
Christ.  
tom. 3.  
pag. 25.

I proceed to the Argument of this Section. And I do not need (I think) to take much pains with it; for if what has now been premis'd, be carefully remembred in the perusal of the first chapter of *Genesis*, all difficulties and perplexities concerning the system of the Creation therein describ'd, will easily vanish. I will therefore

therefore but paraphrase upon the more remarkable texts of this chapter.

Ver. 1. *In the beginning God created heaven and earth ;* that is, heaven and earth had no beginning, or did not begin to be, till God created them.

Ver. 2. *And the Earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the Deep:* In this verse the *Earth* and the *Deep* cannot be understood in the proper meaning of those words, because as yet the *Earth* and the *Deep* were not properly in *being* ; compare ver. 9, 10. The terms therefore *Earth* and *Deep* are spoken of figuratively, and by way of anticipation or *Prolepsis*, and also *Metonymie*, or the thing containing for the thing after contain'd, to denote the space where now the *Earth* and the *Deep* is, and then the second verse will run thus: And where now the *Earth* is, or in that Space, there was nothing then, no matter, no *form* nor shape, but all was utterly a *void* : and likewise in the space now occupy'd by the *deep*, all was *darkness*. *And the Spirit of God mov'd upon the face of the waters.* Taking this Phrase, the *face of the waters*, figuratively, as has now been

F 3                    explain'd,

*Arguments in Proof of*

explain'd, the text will naturally run thus, the spirit or power of God moved or operated in the Space where all was darkness, to produce light; for it immediately follows, *and God said, Let there be light.*

Here a difficulty arises, whether this light was the proper effect of a luminous Body? They who suppose the Earth and the Waters now spoken of to be a pre-existent Chaos, or, as it were, the dregs and ruins of a former world aforetime perish'd, and that the heavenly Spheres had been long in being before this new Creation, expedite the matter by saying, that this light was the pure effect of the Sun darting his beams upon the Chaos, which before were intercepted by the mist of gross atoms overclouding it, but now by the fiat of God perfectly dissipated. But as ver. 16, 17. God is said to make two great lights, the one to rule the day, and the other the night, and to set them in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the Earth, this resolution of the difficulty seems by no means reconcileable to Moses's system. It is certainly more conformable to the text, to apprehend that light not to be the natural effect of a lucid Body,

b'nislqyo

but

but rather of the divine power only, tho' we cannot philosophically account for it: but we can know and demonstrate by the rules of philosophy, that the same infinite power that fram'd the huge Fabrick of heaven and earth, and the luminous Spheres, can undoubtedly form so small an effect as *light*, tho' we cannot alledge a physical reason how this was done. And the appointed duration of this *light*, succeeded by a certain proportion of *darkness*, God called *day* and *night*, and the *evening*, which was *darkness* or *night*, and the *morning*, when *light* or *day* appear'd, (that is, a certain suppos'd space of darkness and light, or such a space of time as after from evening to evening was the measure of one day) was, as the Hebrew expresses it, *the first day*.

The second day's work, ver. 6, 7, 8. seems to have a little more difficulty. In order therefore to understand the true purport of the text, it will be necessary to determine what is meant by the *firmament*, as we render the Hebrew word, which in the margin of the Bible is more properly explain'd by the term *expansion*, or open space of air from the earth

upwards. Now this open space cou'd not be space only, for that was coæval with God himself, and eternal. Therefore when God says, *Let there be a firmament or expansion*, it is as if he had said, Let the open space above the earth be fill'd with a thin transparent body, to be a proper subject of light, and also capable (as it immediately follows) *to divide the waters that were* (or that were to be) *under the firmament*, (or expansion) *from the waters which were* (or were to be) *above the firmament* (or expansion); that is, to support the clouds, which in their seasons were to *water the earth*. For that by *the waters above the firmament* is properly meant the clouds, may plainly enough be prov'd from the following places of the scriptures, *Judg.* v. 4. *2 Sam.* xxi. 10. *Ps.* lxxii. 6. and civ. 13. *Isa.* lv. 10. and many others. After this it follows, *And the evening and the morning were the second day.*

*Ver. 9, 10. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gather'd into one place, and let dry Land appear. And God called the dry Land, Earth, and the gathering of the waters, seas ; that is, Let there*

there be waters gather'd together into one place to become Seas, and let there be dry Land to form the Bulk of the Earth. What chiefly renders this third day's work more perplexing, is, that it is not said simply, as at other times, *Let there be Waters*, *Let there be Earth*, or *God made the Waters and the Earth*; and that the Phraseology of this day, is rather such as seems to suppose the *Waters* and the *Earth* pre-existent as a mixt and rude Chaos. But this cannot be the true purport of the Phraseology as written by *Moses*, as will manifestly appear by a comparison with, and reference to the other scriptures; for where-ever there is occasion to make mention in them of God's power over the world, or its creation, it is usually in such Phrases as these, *God laid the foundation of the Earth*, *God made the Heavens, the Earth, the Seas, and all that therein is*, *Exod. xx. 11. Nebem. ix. 6. Ps. xc. 2. and cxlv. 6. Isa. xlv. 12. Acts xiv. 15. Rev. xiv. 7.* But in the supposition that the earth and the waters had before actually, tho' mixtly existed together, God cou'd not properly and truly be said to have *created*

*Heaven*

Arguments in Proof of  
Heaven and Earth, and all that therein  
is.

To this it may be reply'd, that altho' the earth and the waters were confusedly together in being before, yet it wou'd be strictly true, that God made Heaven and Earth, because God molded and fram'd them into that system in which they now are, even as an Architect is properly said to make or build a house, tho' all the materials were ready before. But this is a very lame parity, and wide from the purpose: for it is beyond all question evident, that the full intent of Moses was to set forth God to be the sole Cause of heaven and earth, and of all that is in them; that every thing, little or great, ows its being to him; and this in general seems to be express'd in the first verse of this chapter, *In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth;* which words can import nothing less than that neither heaven nor earth, nor any thing in (or of) them, had any beginning or being till God created them. And this is the plain sense of the scriptures throughout. The difference therefore lies in this, that altho' an Architect may properly be said to make a house,

a house, yet it cannot be true that he makes all that is in it, for neither the wood, nor stone, &c. are of his making.

I confess the style of *Moses*, in his description of the Creation, is not exact and suited to the systematick principles and forms of expression of the Philosophic writings of the Greeks, nor according to the modern rules and terms which are fashion'd from them; notwithstanding, it is undenieable and very certain that the design of *Moses* was chiefly so to express himself, that all men shou'd learn from him, that *Heaven*, and *Earth*, the *Sea*, and *all that is in them*, every particle of matter, was created or made by God alone. And however his context of words may vary from our present method of expressing things and systems of nature, it was undoubtedly understood according to his meaning by those for whom he writ; and whatever obscurity we may imagine to be in *Moses's* expression of the creation of the world, I am perswaded this is chiefly owing to our being more conversant in the learning of the antient Greek Philosophers, or of their disciples, than in the much more important and improving

improving study of the holy scriptures. And with this I shall conclude my observation on the divine work of the third day.

As to the remaining part of the first chapter of *Genesis*, the text is very plain and intelligible, and does not need any further illustration of it. One passage however relating to the creation in the second chapter, ver. 21, 22. concerning the formation of *Eve*, I must not omit to explain: It is there said, *God caus'd a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he took one of his ribs, and clos'd up the flesh instead thereof, and the rib made be a woman.* It is very possible that those, who chiefly admire the learning of the antients, or are wholly taken up in the reading of amusing and diverting Tracts, will hardly relish this Philosophy of *Moses*. But before they pass their censure upon this passage, it wou'd be but fair in them, to consult what the Antients have suggested concerning the Origin of our Species. And indeed, as I have already taken notice in the foregoing Section, they have transmitted to us such idle and absurd notions and positions concerning it, that  
they

they are deservedly despis'd and rejected by all men.

But it is something strange (some may say) that *Eve* was not made together, or in the same manner with her consort ; and why after him ? and why was he to be maim'd and curtail'd of one of his ribs to erect of this a companion to him like to himself ? I will not presume that what I shall say in answer to this so nice an enquiry, and rather curious than important, will give the same content to all others, it does to me ; but however this may be, I will venture to give what I think a satisfactory answer to this question. And I might premise, (as I did on a like occasion in the beginning of this Section) that it does not concern us to know the reason of the divine Proceeding, in such cases as relate to God's freedom in acting, and where the knowledge of it can be of no benefit to us. It is sufficient that we can discern no irregularity in the operation itself, or that it offers no violence nor opposition to reason. And certainly the formation of *Eve*, as deliver'd by *Moses*, does not offend against any one principle of reason ; for it is equally in

the

the divine power to have created *Eve* out of nothing, or out of the mold of the earth, (whence *Adam* was taken) or to chuse a rib of the first man to be the ground-work of this new creature ; no objection lying more against any one of these ways, than against another : indeed I can see no difficulty in any one of them. As therefore from the surprizing wonders wrought by *Moses*, we have just reason to believe that he was under the immediate direction of the divine spirit, when he deliver'd this and the other facts now before us, so we cannot reasonably call in question the truth of them. But this perhaps will look like too servile a manner of resolving such doubts as these, wherein reason has little or no share ; I will therefore endeavour to suggest a rational motive, which may be suppos'd to determine the formation of *Eve* in the manner above describ'd.

And this I found principally on the nature and circumstance of that social life they were to lead together ; for they were to be join'd together with an indissoluble bond and unity of affection, comfort, and partnership in every incident

dent of life ; so that each of them was bound to love, comfort, and to treat each other as himself, whereof one being a part of the other, was to them an evident token and pledge, and which was so apprehended by *Adam*, as plainly enough appears from the following verses 23, 24. where he immediately is mention'd to say, *This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh, she shall be call'd \* Woman, because she was taken out of man ; therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.* This observation may receive further light from that natural affection and tye of nature, that universally arises and subsists between all parents and their children, which can no otherwise be so well accounted for, as by reason of that communication or participation the one has receiv'd from the other, and which consequently causes both of them to regard one another almost as their very selves.

Having now taken a minute survey of the creation of the world, as deliver'd by *Moses*, and examin'd the principal diffi-

\* *Arius Montanus* renders the Hebrew word *virago*, and in the margin *virissa*, that is, She-man.

culties and objections to which it may seem to lie open, I confess I do not apprehend that a rational and unbyass'd mind, that will fairly and impartially weigh and consider the reason of things, *viz.* that God, who is wisdom itself, cannot but act according to some determinate end and purpose, which must appear as well in the first creation, as in the consequent government of the world, and which manifestly appears in all the books of *Moses*, where one continu'd chain of a wise and most consistent order and disposition of the divine counsels and purposes runs visible throughout them, and which is far from being observable in the most imperfect and absurd systems of the

*see Diod.*  
*Sic. l. 1.*  
*p. 6, &c.*

Antient Philosophers: I say, whoever will so fairly and impartially weigh and consider the reason of things, can hardly ballance at all, he can be under no perplexity of mind, in acknowledging and receiving the truth of the world's creation, as describ'd in the book of *Genesis*; more especially if he will be at the trouble of considering at the same time how loosely, how absurdly and inconsistently this matter has been handl'd and treated by the  
sages

sages of old, so renown'd for their great sagacity and penetration into the mysteries of nature, and which may be seen in a relation of their lives and writings by *Laertius, Stanley, and others.*

In conclusion of this Section, I wou'd take notice, that as in verses 6, 7, 8, 9. of the first chapter of *Genefis*, the *waters* and the *earth* or *land* seem to be suppos'd as pre-existent before their separation; in the supposition that this *mixt Chaos* was first created (without fixing any determinate time for it) by God, I see no reason to enter into a contest about this question; for thus it will be true, that the *world, and all that is therein*, is the sole effect of the divine power, which is the principal truth intended by *Moses* in the description of the six days work: notwithstanding, I see no reason to depart from the exposition of this matter I have given above; because the text of the first chapter of *Genefis* seems to me more consistent with that, than with any other method. But whethersoever of these two ways may be approv'd of, it sufficiently appears, from what has been said, that the *Cosmopoia*, or creation of the world,

as given by *Moses*, is so far from being in the least contrary, that 'tis rather highly consonant to reason, which is the principal subject of this section; and the truth of which will still further be made good, when we consider it with relation to those further undoubted characters of truth, *Chronology, Chorography, and the peopling of the world.*

## S E C T. III.

*Of the Chronology and Chorography of Moses's writings, and of the Holy Scriptures.*

1st. **O**F *Chronology*. *Chronology* signifies an account or computation of time; and is the very light or touchstone of history, by which all facts and occurrences are rang'd in their proper series, and by which the truth of them may easily be try'd and distinguish'd. For as in the several nations of the world many contemporary incidents happen at or near the same time, and as there is hardly a People of the earth, but some attempt has been made to commit to writing an account of them, if not from their

their first Origin, at least from some remarkable Epoch ; and again, as many wonderful Phænomena of nature and memorable events, as *Comets, Eclipses, Inundations, Famines, Plagues, Wars, &c.* are intermixt in the course of time ; all these, by way of *Synchronisms* or fixt points, and as unquestionable witnesses, happily contribute to clear up doubts and uncertainties of things related, and by them we are enabled in many cases to distinguish betwixt truth and fable, and betwixt the true impartial and fabulous writer, and ascertain to events their proper seasons and periods.

As to the Chronology of the Easterns, I mean of the *Chinese, Pagans in Indostan, Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Ægyptians*, they very absurdly antedate their computations many thousand years before the beginning of time. And there being no ground at all for such computations, consequently the mention that is made of them, can only be by way of presumption or supposition, not with any the most distant pretence to probability. The *Chinese* boast of the great antiquity of their Empire, as of above forty thousand years.

See *P. le Comte's* letters, lett. 5. address'd to Mr. *de Tarsi*. As to the Pagans of *India*, I have been inform'd from those that have convers'd with some of their Philosophers, that they pretend to have Libraries of many thousand years standing, and that they have a computation of time of above fifty thousand years. But their discourses on these matters are extremely wild and extravagant, and grossly fabulous, suitably to their state of utter darkness and ignorance.

The *Ægyptians* of old contended with the *Babylonians* and *Chaldeans* for the glory of Antiquity: and as the *Babylonians* divide the state of mankind into three Governments, namely, the first under *Gods* from *Alorus* (or *Adam*, as we may suppose) to *Xithurus* (or *Noa*, viz. to the *Flood*); which Government contains, according to them, ten Generations: the second under *Demi-gods*; the third under Kings or men; and during the course of these three states, are reckon'd up above thirty thousand years: So *Manetho*, the *Ægyptian* Historian, to display the Antiquity of his Nation, and throw the ballance on their side, likewise divides his chronological

gical account into the three above states of Gods, Demi-gods, and Kings; and the whole of this account (which *Diodorus*<sup>See Peri-</sup>  
*stiles fabulous*) amounts to upwards of <sup>zonus</sup>  
<sup>Ægypt.</sup> thirty six thousand five hundred twenty <sup>Orig. c. 2.</sup>  
five years. One advantage we may ob- <sup>Diod. Sic.</sup>  
serve by the way in behalf of the history <sup>l. 1. p. 22.</sup>  
of *Moses*, that both the *Babylonian* and <sup>edit. Han-</sup>  
*Ægyptian* Chronologies attribute to the <sup>viae 1604.</sup>  
lives of the Gods (or, as we may suppose, <sup>1200.</sup>  
to the *Antediluvians*) a much longer term <sup>Diod. cit.</sup>  
of years than to the Demi-gods (or *Prest-* <sup>300.</sup>  
*diluvians*); and again, to these a longer   
thread of life than to the succeeding  
kings, which, as to this particular, is very  
conformable to the history of *Moses*. \*

As to their extravagant periods of years, (I mean of the *Babylonians* and *Ægyptians*) they are absolutely fictitious, and void of all proof or rational context, and seem calculated rather for vain boasting, than as a real matter of fact. *Diodorus Siculus*, l. 1. pag. 22. says, that the *Ægyptian* Priests reckon'd from the reign

\* *Joseph. l. 1. against Apion*, says, That *Berothus*, the famous Historian, a *Chaldean* by birth, writes of the deluge, of *Noah's* Ark resting in *Armenia*, of the re-peopling the world by *Noah's* sons, and from them draws a succession down to *Nabolassar*, pag. 1044.

*Arguments in Proof of*

of *Sol* to the time of *Alexander's* expe-  
dition into *Asia* twenty-three thousand  
years ; but pag. 41. when, according to  
the *Ægyptian* calculation, he makes a  
distribution of these years betwixt the  
Gods, Hero's, and Kings, he greatly mul-  
tiplies the former number to thirty-three  
thousand ; for he computes that the Gods  
and Demi-gods reign'd eighteen thousand  
years, and the succeeding Kings, &c. fif-  
teen thousand. *Cicero*, l. 1. *de divinat.*  
pag. 88. *old edit.* taking notice that the  
*Babylonians* boasted of having Records  
from four hundred and seventy thousand  
years upwards, condemns this boasting  
of theirs either of folly, vanity, or impru-  
dence ; and *Diodorus Sic.* l. 2. pag. 118.  
pronounces this number of years of the  
*Babylonians* altogether *incredible*.

Now these several computations of the  
*Babylonians* and *Ægyptians*, are made  
without any plausible mention of facts,  
or context of history, and chiefly for the  
sake of a certain series of calculations of  
years, by fixing numbers of years to  
names of suppos'd Persons, Kings, Dy-  
nasts, or Potentates, &c. in order to spin  
out imaginary periods of time, and which  
they

they might, with the same reason, have carry'd on to double or treble the stretch of time, and so on ; for as they alledge no argument for the truth of their assertions, so neither can we regularly disprove them. We do indeed, with good reason, reject and despise such monstrous accounts, that have only bare words for their foundation, and which are contrary to all observation on the progres's of mankind, on the improvement of husbandry, trade, &c. and the invention and advancement of Arts and Sciences. It is moreover very evident, that the Chronology of the *Babylonians* and *Ægyptians* is altogether inconsistent (as we have it record'd by various Authors) and contradictory, and so intricate and unsatisfactory, that little more is to be gain'd by the study of it, than the reputation of having read those antient writings, and being able from thence to form a list of uncouth names. This benefit however must necessarily result from such a study, that by comparing the abovesaid accounts with the history of *Moses*, in which we find a series of Persons, facts and time, so justly and consistently begun and carry'd

on, that the Reader, impartially influenc'd by the reason of things, cannot but entertain an high esteem of the plainness and truly apparent veracity of the writings of *Moses*, and professes that rational belief of their veracity, which is unquestionably due to them.

As to the Chronology of the *Greeks*, it is usually divided into *obscure*, (that is altogether uncertain) *fabulous*, and *historical*, or more to be depended on, tho' this is mixt with a great deal of fabulous trash, and very unworthy of those hands that committed it to writing. From the citation out of *Plutarch* in the end of the first section of this chapter, it is very manifest how little is to be rely'd on what their Authors have written before the time of *Theseus* (which falls in with the time of the Book of *Judges*, and before the Ministry of *Samuel*) and *Thucydides*, who was contemporary with the *Peloponnesian* war, (which happen'd about the time of the building the second temple, or of the Prophets *Haggai* and *Zacharias*, year before Christ 429) and writ his history five hundred years before

before *Plutarch*, declares τὰ περὶ αὐτῶν, Thucyd.  
ἢ τὰ ἔτι παλαιότεροι στρατοῖς μὲν ἐνρέψαν διὰ  
χρήσις πλάθος ἀδόνατον ήν, “that 'tis im-  
“possible to have a certain information  
“(or a competent knowledge) of those  
“things that were done before these  
“wars, and much less of those that hap-  
“pen'd long before.” And indeed how  
unworthy of credit is the greatest part of  
those things related by *Plutarch*, in his  
lives of *Theseus* and *Romulus*, &c. which  
were suppos'd to fall out long before this  
Period of the *Peloponnesian war*?

I premis'd this general reflection on  
the Chronology of the Principal Nations,  
that the evenness and consistency of the  
Scripture account of time might thereby  
become more satisfactory to the Reader,  
when he carefully considers it. It must  
be confess'd, that from the Creation to  
the Deluge, or from *Adam* to *Noa*, the  
history of *Moses* contains little more than  
names and calculations of years, ascer-  
tain'd to the lives of the principal de-  
scendents of *Seth*, through whom the  
*Family* (of which the Meffia was to be  
born) was to be propagated. And as it  
is very justly objected against the cata-  
logue

logue of the *Gods* and *Demi-gods*, &c. that were suppos'd to rule in *Ægypt*, *Babylon*, &c. that 'tis only a supputation of names and years, without authentic facts for the foundation of such a catalogue; so it may perhaps be question'd, whether the account *Moses* gives, be any thing more than a recital of names and years, without sufficient matter to build the truth of such a recital upon.

To this I answer; that there is a wide difference between the two Cases before us. For (not to insist on the immediate Presence of the divine spirit attending *Moses* through the whole of his ministry and writings, of which we have undeniable proofs) *1st.* The Chronological

*See General History of Tables of the Babylonians and Ægyptians the world, now pub-* (as far as we can learn) consists chiefly of such a recital of names and years for N<sup>o</sup> II. B. I.

ch. i. p. 90. many thousands of years, even after the Reigns of the Gods and Demi-gods, under the Kings, Dynasts, or Potentates, &c. whereas the account of *Moses*, immediately after the flood, is more particular and historical as to facts, and the circumstance of time and place. *2dly.* The Period of the Scripture Chronology before the flood

is comparably short, and perfectly consistent with the state of the first Ages of the World; for therein we have a particular, and very rational and credible account of the first propagation of mankind, for which was necessary a *Longævity* or extraordinary continuation of life to the first Progenitors. And moreover, the duration of that period does not in any manner exceed the bounds of a rational belief, as bearing a just proportion to the Ages after the *Flood*, the relation of which Ages in the book of *Genefis* is clearer and more satisfactory: I say, the *Antediluvian* period bears a just proportion to the following Ages after the *Flood*: And this,

1st. Whether we consider it with relation to the great extent of life peculiar to the *Antediluvians*, for the propagation of mankind, and the gradual decrease of years of the *Postdiluvians*, when the *East*, the *Mother Region* of the Earth, being competently provided with inhabitants, a shorter term of life was thence after sufficient for the ends of society, for the education of children, and their instruction

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instruction in all necessary knowledge and useful Arts, and for their settlement in the world : Or,

2dly. Whether we consider that proportion with relation to the Age of the world to this our time. For the general *deluge* was brought upon the Earth in the year of the world 1656 ; from thence to the departure of the *Israelites* out of *Ægypt* are reckon'd 797 years ; from thence to *Saul* the first king of *Israel* 426 ; from thence to the Captivity 471 ; from thence to the return of the Jews 69 ; from thence to *Antiochus Epiphanes*, the inhuman Perfector of God's people, 356 ; and thence to the Birth of our Blessed Redeemer 173 ; all which periods make up the term of 3948 years. (*Note*, This account is from period to period, exclusive of the last year of the former period: *ex. gr.* from the captivity to the return is but 69 years, exclusive of the last year of the foregoing period, which was the first year of the captivity, and completes the whole term of the captivity to be 70 years. *Note also*, That the *Æra* of the Christian account of time begins

begins from *January*, which follow'd the month of *December*, in which our Blessed Saviour is generally believ'd to have been born at *Bethlehem*; so that in truth our Blessed Lord was born in the year 3947, according to the true account, or two years after, as is vulgarly reckon'd).

And in this supputation of time we are not conducted through a series of years, wherein is interpers'd any *hiatus* or void spaces of time, but by an uninterrupted clue, and a serious and rational context of matter and events, (for the most part at least) which begins with an *historical*, *chronological*, and *chorographical* account of things and persons, according to the primitive simplicity, innocence, and uncultivated nature of the first Ages, \* and gradually ascends, as men improv'd by experience and observation on the precedent times, and in artful wickedness too, to the more subtle methods and tricks of state government, and of mens dealing with one another.

\* Which no doubt the Antients ignorantly and fabulously alluded to under the character of the *Anaeum seculum*, or *golden age*, when innocence and justice chiefly prevail'd amongst men.

## Arguments in Proof of

I am persuaded, if due heed was given to this observation, the Chronology of *Moses*, and of the Holy Scriptures in general, wou'd shine with a strong light of credibility, more especially when compar'd with that of the *Babylonians* and *Ægyptians*, and with the thread of profane history given us of those Ages, wherein that history deserves our regard, and which profane history almost exactly agrees with that of the holy Scriptures, as to persons and facts of later times, mention'd both by the sacred and the heathen writers. As to the computation of the *Hebrew* and the *Greek* Bible, that is of the LXX, there is a variation in some particulars, and consequently in the whole amount of years: but when we consider the reasons that occasion this difference, we shall not easily be surpriz'd at it; for in *Hebrew*, as well as in *Greek*, numbers are express'd by the letters of the Alphabet; and in *Hebrew* some letters are so like one another, that the one may be (and is often in reading) easily mistaken for the other; a point, a little dash, nay, even a blot, will cause an alteration of the numerical letter, and falsify or vary the

the number of years ; and this may frequently happen through the ignorance or carelessness of copyists ; and if we suppose the copy we now have of the *Greek* or LXX's translation to be exactly the same as the Original itself, (which is doubted by many) yet how can we be <sup>see</sup> Hearne's  
Duct. Hist.  
vol. I. p. 18 sure the copy of the *Hebrew* text, upon which the *Greek* translation was form'd, had none of the above-mention'd mistakes in it ? And this precaution may, I think, in some measure account for the different calculations of the *Hebrew* and *Greek* Bible ; at least, it cannot but prevent all suspicion of the truth of the history itself : for in like manner we are frequently put to it to excuse the difference we find in historians the most worthy of credit ; and without this allowance, we must reject all history.

Add to this, that different Nations vary, and sometimes even the same Nation, on particular occasions, have vary'd in their dating the beginning of their years ; and that the beginning of the reigns of succeeding princes is taken by some historians the year before, by others the year after they really commenc'd. These and other

other like causes render the reconciling of different Chronological accounts something difficult and perplexing ; but a judicious and impartial reader is always upon his guard on these accounts, and is not overhasty in calling into doubt the truth of the fact itself, because the date of it seems differently related.

If therefore in reading and comparing the Scripture narrations with those of the profane histories, we sometimes meet with such doubtful passages, it is the part of a fair and candid Reader, rather to give credit to the Scripture account, where appears a general, serious, and artless context of truth, and a plain design to promote Religion, Virtue, and the true and rational worship of God, and this only, than to profane writers, in whom those characters do not so plainly appear.

In the last place we may observe, that the Scripture-Chronology is not understand and explain'd in the same manner, i. e. so as to contain the same number of years by all Christian Writers. But this cannot seem strange, if we reflect on the reasons of this just now given, and at the same

same time consider how small the difference is with regard to so long a calculation of time. For to alledge the instance of Christ's Birth, which *Helvicus* reckons in the 3948th year of the world, Archbishop *Usher* in the 4000th, *Scaliger* in the 3950th ; and if we will look over the List of Authors disagreeing as to this period drawn up by Mr. *Hearne*, we shall find the difference among those of chief note in the study of Chronology, hardly to exceed an hundred and fifty years ; a trifling number, in respect of so comprehensive a period, and in consideration of the many difficulties which occur in the study of History and Chronology, and a manifest argument of the truth and plainness of the Scripture history. Which truth of Scripture history may be further illustrated and strengthen'd by an easy and familiar instance, drawn from experience and family-tradition, to prove the authority and strong human credibility, of the history of *Moses*. For see Alstedius, p. 98. (as may be seen in *Hearne's Duct. Hist. Helvicus* vol. I. pag. 109. See *Helvicus*, pag. 17.) p. 6, 7, &c. as there were but five descendants between *Adam* and *Moses*, two of which liv'd together

## Arguments in Proof of

gether a considerable number of years, *ex. gr.* *Adam* liv'd with (*a*) *Methusalem* at least 115 years; (*b*) *Methusalem* liv'd 98 with *Sem*; *Sem* 110 with (*c*) *Isaac*; (*d*) *Isaac* 33 with *Levi*; (*e*) *Amram* was the Grandson of *Levi*, and (*f*) Father of *Moses*, which *Moses* was born 41 years after the death of *Levi*; so that *Amram* must have liv'd a considerable time with his Grandfather *Levi*: I say, as betwixt *Adam* and *Moses* there were but five descendants, so as two of them to be a considerable time contemporaries, it is very easy to conceive how the short account *Moses* delivers of the *Antediluvian* world might be handed down to him without straining the authority of tradition, and only by repeated information of the Fathers, Grandfathers, &c. and this without the help of letters, hieroglyphicks, or otherways.

As to the History and Chronology of the holy Scriptures, from the Book of *Joshua* down to near the Christian Epoch,

(*a*) Compare *Gen.* v. 3—21. (*b*) *Gen.* v. 21—32.  
*ch.* xi. ver. 10. (*c*) *Gen.* xi. 10—26. compar'd with  
*ch.* xxi. 5. (*d*) Compare *Gen.* xxv. 26. and *ch.*  
xxix. 34. and *ch.* xxxiii. 29. and *Ex.* vi. 16. (*e*) *Ex.*  
vi. 16—18. (*f*) *Ex.* vi. 20. See *Helvicus*, pag.  
12—22.

it is generally clear and unperplex'd, and with a competent exactness is deduc'd by *Helvicus*, *Alstedius*, and others; and from the reign of *Abaz*, king of *Juda*, the very learned Dean *Prideaux* has, with great labour and accuracy, drawn out a plain and clear connexion of time and events down to our Blessed Lord's crucifixion. It is further worth our observation, that the history of the Scriptures is carry'd on by a succession of holy and simple men, (as their works plainly discover) who, for the most part, were at a long distance of time from one another, and consequently incapable of forming a design to impose on the world a meer fable for truth; that there is a surprizing conformity and agreement in their relations; that their works bear the incontestable characters of truth, sincerity, and of credibility; and that one plain simple design runs through them all, *viz.* to inform their Readers of the wonderful goodness of God towards men, to instruct and persuade them to receive and put in practice those excellent truths and precepts God has vouchsaf'd to deliver to them. And surely such a collection of

Records, so rational in themselves, (excepting some few passages, where the difficulty of rightly apprehending them, is chiefly owing to our ignorance of the idiom in which they are deliver'd, or of some particular circumstances or occurrences they may allude to) so highly beneficial to mankind, so authentic, and so unexceptionably attested by the concurrent testimony of writers in all Ages (I do not understand here, that heathen writers make so constant a mention of these records, neither can it be expected they shou'd, because the *Jews* in religious matters were utterly separated from the rest of the world, and the books of scriptures not treating purposely of the subjects of Philosophy, polite learning, &c. were despis'd by, and of little use to the *Greeks* and others) : I say, these Records, so unexceptionably attested by the concurrent testimony of writers in all Ages, from the time when they were first deliver'd ; and further, held so sacred by all those that possess'd them, that they thought no hazard, even of all their possessions and their lives too, too great to run in defence of them, and which were

were at all times appeal'd to for the reclaiming of men to their duty ; and finally, which contain such a visible series of the divine providence over men, *See ch. 6.7* so many oraculous predictions fulfill'd in their proper season, and plainly demonstrate a continu'd thread of the divine purpose for the salvation of man accomplish'd in our Blessed Redeemer ; I say, such a collection of records surely cannot but prevail with all sober-minded men, that are impartial, truly unbias'd and unprejudic'd in their searches after truth, not only to receive and yield an absolute belief to them, but to make it their whole study to give heed to what is therein contain'd, in order to practise what they recommend, that they may finally partake of the blessings therein also promis'd.

Let any one compare the simplicity (I think truly the majesty) of the Scripture stile, its artless delivery of the most solid and beneficial truths to mankind, and its most consistent and rational chain and connexion of history and Chronology, drawn out from the creation of the world to the end of the *Acts*, containing a

period of 4010 years; let any one, I say, compare these excellencies of the Scriptures with the fabulous and meer childish stuff, the continual irreconcilable contradictions of the *Greek* and other profane writers of history, the soft and useless wit and politeness (any further than for a present amusement) of the *Greek* and *Roman* Authors, and if impartial reason is his guide, he must acknowledge, that some power superior to man's art and contrivance, was necessary to conduct and carry through so long a period, so continu'd, so rational, and so uniform a context of history and Chronology, concerning matters of the highest moment to mankind; and consequently, that the divine Providence was all along engag'd herein, by working, and thus making known to men a divine series of events, which God was pleas'd to purpose and accomplish for the redemption of mankind, by the coming and suffering of his only begotten Son. From what has hitherto been said and observ'd upon this first head, it seems undeniably to follow, that as far as Chronology can bear testimony to the truth of any history, the books of *Moses*, and

of the other holy Scriptures, have the unquestionable advantage of this testimony.

2dly. Of the *Chorography* of Moses's writings and of the holy Scriptures in general. By the term *Chorography* I understand here such a mention of *kingdoms, states, cities, rivers, persons and places*, which is according to their proper situation, circumstance, and the truth of them. I cannot examine this particular throughout, without giving an exact *Chorographical* or *Geographical* description of the chief parts of *Western-Asia*, of *Africa*, and of a considerable part of *Europe*; which wou'd engage me in an undertaking too extensive for my present design, and altogether unnecessary to make good the truth, which is the chief Subject of this second Head. It will be sufficient to observe and to assert, that every one of the particulars above spoken of, (and which are almost numberless) of which mention is made, or a narration of them given in the books of *Moses* and of the following Scriptures; I say, every one of the above particulars was truly and exactly

H 4 such,

such, according to name, position and circumstance, as is related in the books of *Moses* and of the other Scriptures, as will evidently and with great satisfaction appear to every one that will take the pains to examine the matter it self.

For instance, and not to be at too much trouble, let any one but look over with an inquisitive eye the travels of St. *Paul*, as given us in the *Acts*, or any chapter of the Old or New Testament, and compare them with the Maps of *Strabo*, or other Geographical descriptions of the Antients, or their histories; and he will find the Chorographical relations of the Scriptures perfectly agreeable to them, excepting such names of places, persons, &c. which are more antient than the times, according to which those maps or histories were design'd and written. From this Specimen (if he will proceed to no further examination) let him conceive (as with good reason he may) the like fidelity and accuracy to be in every other part of the Bible, and the result of this ought rationally to be; since so many Authors, absolutely unknown to, and utterly separated from one another, both

as

as to time and place, so perfectly concur in the mention of an infinity of things, names, places, &c. 1st. That these were all men of uprightness and integrity. 2dly. Considering the frailties of men, subject to inadvertencies, mistakes, misinformations, and other like imperfections, that such an harmony and agreement of Writers can hardly be conceiv'd possible, without the particular interposition of divine power to effect it.

It may be proper however to advertise the Reader, that the same persons, people, cities, &c. are stil'd by different names by different Authors (especially by the *Greek* and *Latin* Writers) according to the different idioms of their writings. But this, notwithstanding the matter as to place, is just and true, and the appellation also in the *Hebrew* tongue in what concerns the Old Testament, and in the *Greek* in what concerns the New Testament, is properly given, and by which it was known at the time when the subject of those writings were made publick, and long after. The learned Dean *Pri-deaux* has moreover justly taken notice, that after the *Jews* were return'd from their

Connect.  
B. 5. vol. I.  
pag. 342,  
&c.

their 70 years captivity, when *Ezra* collected the books of Scripture, and form'd his Canon of them, he, in some places, added to the original text of the *Pentateuch* and others, certain explanatory phrases to render it more intelligible to those of his time; and also, that he either chang'd the names of certain places for those they were distinguish'd by at that time, or reserving the old names, super-added the others by way of explanation. But this is no derogation from the truth of the Scripture Chorography, since not only the primitive appellations of those places are generally mention'd and known, but the point of place and situation is exact and conformable to the history there related.

And here again we have another most excellent and an irrefragable argument of the veracity of *Moses* and the other sacred Writers, I may add, and of the manifest superintendency of the divine Spirit over them; for had they really been no more than common Writers or Historiographers, especially considering that they were not deeply learned (as may appear from their works) but rather ignorant of

the

the more polite and regular knowledge of the Metaphysicks, Philosophy, and other Sciences, it wou'd almost have been impossible for them not to have committed many errors or mistakes (common to the most learned Authors) in placing the scenes of their history and relations, in dating the times of the occurrences they have left us in writing, and equally impossible also not to have left us many irreconcileable contradictions between one another (such as we find in profane Writers) to struggle with. But unquestionably to divine Providence ever attending them are we to ascribe it, that so many different Authors, so far distant from each other both as to places and ages of the world, have transmitted to us so uniform, so consonant and harmonious a chain and connection of history without any disagreement or almost variation (but with relation to the subject of their compositions) from the beginning of time almost to the period of four thousand and ten years. An infallible proof (I will call it) not only of their veracity, but of the divine counsel always carrying on the eternal purpose of God, which was to conduct

duct the minds of men, by an uniform series of history and events, to one principal event, the *coming of the Messia*, long before, even almost from the beginning of the world, promis'd, and at length fulfill'd, in the *Birth, Preaching and Suffering* of our Blessed Redeemer *Jesus Christ*, for a blessing and salvation to the whole world.

That this proof may appear with the stronger Emphasis, let us remember the

See those  
in the  
Notes on  
the Clas-  
ficks on  
the New  
Roman  
History, on  
the last  
Edition of  
Plutarch's  
Lives, &c.

innumerable contradictions in historic writings we every where meet with between the *Greek* and *Latin* Writers, even between the *Greeks* and the *Greeks*, and between the *Latins* and the *Latins* themselves, Authors in high admiration for

their narrations, and inimitable for the politeness of their diction and stile; and if the interest of truth has any share in us, if we have any hope, any reliance on the divine care and concern for mankind, the *finger of God* will appear plainly visible throughout those most excellent writings of the sacred Penmen, in testimony that the work they were engag'd in was the work of God himself, who was pleas'd

by

by his holy Spirit to direct and conduct the whole of it : that by the manifest visible characters of its truth and fidelity, it might become an infallible guide to lead men to the true and acceptable knowledge, service and worship of God. This Argument will have a further illustration from the subject of the following Section.

S E C T. IV.

*Of the first peopling the Earth, or propagation of Mankind by the sons of Noah.*

THE account *Moses* gives of the first inhabitants of the Earth after the Flood, and when they had been competently multiply'd, of their separation into different Regions of the world, in order to take possession of them, and by successive generations to supply them with inhabitants, and so by degrees to lay the foundation not only of *social life*, but of *civil unity* of many families into one aggregate and regular Body or Assembly for their mutual safety and participation of all the comforts and benefits of society; I say, the account *Moses* gives

of the first peopling the Earth, or of the gradual progress of Mankind, may very justly be deem'd a powerful Argument of the truth of the writings of *Moses*: and this the rather, because not one Author among the Heathens has attempted to form any so much as plausible conjectures concerning this matter.

I. i. pag.  
6—7.

He menti-  
ons indeed  
*Animals*  
in gene-  
ral, not  
excepting  
Men;

*Diodorus Siculus* indeed, according to the systems of the *Atomical* and *Epicurean* Philosophy, begins his history with supposing that the first of human race were form'd of the slime or moisture of the Earth: and that the Earth, when first form'd, abounded with an over-fruitful procreative matter, which being impregnated by the seasonable warmth of the sun, and gradually nourish'd by the accession of new matter, in its proper time became molded and ripen'd into the perfect composition and frame of a human Body. That by this first production the procreative power of the Earth was exhausted, and from thence forwards the first Beings so produc'd inherited the genital or procreative power of their mother *Earth*, and were render'd capable of begetting of themselves other Beings like

like to themselves. And to this base and vile Original does *Diodorus* ascribe the first of human Race, from whence the kingdoms of the world became furnish'd with a numerous people.

at least as  
the opinio-  
on of their  
greatest  
Philoso-  
phers.

But how absurd, irrational and unsatisfactory is this account of the first parents of Mankind? How slimy, gross and unworthy an Original is this of a rational intellectual Being? How is this suppos'd and advanc'd without argument or reason alledg'd for it, nay, in manifest opposition to both, upon the sole authority of fancy and conjecture? And moreover, how do these conjectures and suppositions leave us still in the dark, when this slimy offspring, like other vegetables, first sprang up, and began to fwell into bladders, and burst out into perfect Beings? Neither do we meet with any further information concerning the first beginning of our species from any other writers of History. These are often particular in their narrations of certain bands of men driven and forc'd away from their cities, and after a wandring quest for some better or more quiet settlements, either themselves forcibly dispossessing the old innocent

cent

cent inhabitants, or seizing a free portion of the country to themselves, and planting there a new race, or rather a new generation of people. But whence these themselves derive their descent, is left uncertain. And indeed, whatever account we have from the Greek Writers of things done before the historic *Æra* of the Olympiads (which fell in with the year of the world 3174, and before *Christ* 774, and towards the end of Uzziah's long reign over *Judah*) is as uncertain and supposititious, as fable and a fruitful invention can render it. Whatever therefore more perfect knowledge the world has been bleſſ'd with concerning the transactions of men in the primitive Ages, either before or after the general deluge, is entirely owing to the books of *Moses*: a borrow'd and second-hand glimpse of some matters of which books, together with an elegant superstructure of fable and fiction, has furnish'd the heathen world with the principal themes of their poems and other compositions.

But as utterly blind and ignorant as the Nations, even the polite Nations, have all along continu'd concerning the origin

origin and successive propagation of mankind, and of their doings in the times of the first Ages, the divine counsel and providence has notwithstanding, in conformity to the divine decrees, ever preserv'd amongst men (whom he chose for the ministry of his will to men) a true knowledge of himself, and of the principal affairs of the world (as far as they related to the fulfilling the purposes of God) by the means of the *longævity* or long continuance in life of the Primo-genitors of mankind down to the Flood; namely, by an easy traditional account (to omit the principal method of conveyance by inspiration and divine revelation) of things committed by fathers to their children (probably not without the help of some signs, or written or engrav'd monuments) to the time of *Moses*: who was the first (as we can know of) who set himself to form a System and general History of the world, comprehending a summary account of things carry'd down from the first creation to near the end of his government and life, including the space of 2490 years.

In this Section I have only undertaken to show, that what *Moses* has written

concerning the peopling the Earth, and the founding of Nations, bears all the marks and characterss of truth. To avoid prolixity and perplexity, I shall follow the text of *Moses*: and that my discourse may neither be tedious nor unnecessary, I shall pursue this method, *viz.* To show that the account of *Moses* concerning this point, is perfectly agreeable to that we have from antient Greek Writers: and here again, not to tire the Reader, I shall content myself with quoting one \* profane Author of Note, tho' more might be alledg'd; which, I hope, will be sufficient to convince any one of the undoubted veracity and credibility of what *Moses* has written, and of the continu'd concern of divine Providence for mankind, by fixing amongst men so authentick and precious a record for their information and certain guide to all necessary knowledge, and so wonderfully preserving it to these our days, to be an infallible Note and Proof of God's true Religion.

\* I have indeed sometimes quoted *Josephus* only; but so, that it may be rationally presum'd, that he wrote according to the known truth of the profane History. For he writ for the sake of those who were vers'd in such Historians.

Interpreters of the Scriptures, and some inquisitive Writers, have much busied themselves to find out *after what manner* precisely, and *when*, and by whose authority the Earth was divided among the sons of *Noah* and their Families. As to myself, I fix it as a rule and a principle in matters known to us only by divine Revelation or by the Scriptures, to keep close to the plain text of Scripture: and as in doctrinal matters, to add no new terms nor notions to what the holy Spirit of God has dictated (conceiving divine things to be too high for us to know any thing of them beyond what is reveal'd) so likewise to be cautious in forming conjectures concerning facts that are but briefly deliver'd by the sacred Writers, because we cannot attain to any certain knowledge of them; and moreover, such a knowledge is rather curious than necessary.

It is in the tenth chapter of *Genesij*, that *Moses* begins his account of the sons and posterity of *Noah*, and of the several Nations of the world being founded by them: it begins thus; *Now these are the Generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, &c. Ham, and Japhet: and unto them were*

*Sons born after the flood. The sons of Japhet: Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. And the sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. And the sons of Javan: Elisha, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.* By these (that is, chiefly by the descendants of Gomer and Javan) were the *Isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands, every one after his tongue after their Families in their Nations.* Let us now see how and whether this is true in fact.

But in the first place it will be necessary to know what is here meant by *the Isles of the Gentiles.* According to our notion, an *Isle* is a tract of land surrounded by the Sea or by water. But this does not seem to be the Scripture-meaning of an *Isle* in this place: this rather denotes here a tract of land or a country, the usual passage to which was by sea or by water, more especially such as dealt in traffick, as may be prov'd by many texts of Scripture. See Isa. xi. 11. and xl. 15. and Ezek. xxvii. 3. *Tyre is a Merchant of many people, for many Islands,* that is, many countries, or their people, *come to trade with her by Sea.* And i Maccab.

xiv. 5. Simon took Joppa for an haven, and for an entrance to the Isles of the Sea, that is, in order to traffick with distant trading countries by Sea. By the Isles therefore of the Gentiles are undoubtedly here understood all those countries that lay North-West of Judea, as Asia Minor, or all that tract of Land that lies North of the Mediterranean Sea, and the Regions beyond them, as may appear from Isa. xi. 11. *And it shall come to pass, that the Lord shall set his hand to recover the remnant of his people from Affyria, from beyond Ægypt, from Pathros, from Cussh, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the Islands of the Sea.* Where the Islands of the Sea are expressly distinguish'd from Ægypt, and from the Eastern Continent.

In the separation therefore of the sons of Noah, and in the division of the Earth (however this was made, whether by the special appointment of God, or of Noah, or by lot, or by the free consent of the Parties themselves, nothing of which is distinctly enough express'd by Moses) I say, in this division, the Isles of the Gentiles (that were so call'd afterwards)

wards) that is, *Asia Minor*, and the Regions West of them, fell to the share of *Japhet* and his Posterity. And we have plain footsteps of the truth of this. For, as *Bochart* observes from many Greek Writers, *l. 3. c. 1.* the *Grecians* acknowledg'd *Ιαπετός*, *Japetus* to be the founder of them, and that *no one was more antient than he*; insomuch that *Ιαπετός*, *Japetus* was a proverbial word for an old man, and for one doting with age. I know the Antients have invented many fabulous things of *Japetus*: and, no doubt, an imperfect knowledge of the Scripture-History was the chief groundwork of these and many of their absurd fables (such as the Giants Wars with the Gods from the building of the Tower of *Babel*, &c.) For the fabulous *Japetus*, even according to the fable, cou'd not be antient enough to be the foundation of the proverbial sayings above mention'd, and to be reckon'd the Parent of the *Grecians*. I have inserted this observation here, to show the strong probability (for I pretend to no further evidence in such matters) that these sayings of the *Greeks* took their rise from *Japhet*, the son of *Noah*.

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The first son of *Japhet* nam'd by *Moses* is *Gomer*, who, with his Descendents, possess'd themselves of the lesser *Asia*, that is, as *Josephus* affirms, l. i. *Antiq. c. 7.* from the mountains *Amanus* and *Taurus* to the river *Tanais* or *Don*, and in *Europe* to the land of *Gades* (now *Cadiz.*) And in proof of this *Josephus* takes notice, that the People in his time call'd *Galatæ*, were formerly call'd *Touapēis*, *Gomarens*. *Josephus* wou'd hardly have so positively affirm'd this to the *Greeks* (for whom he writ) had he not had very authentic quotations from creditable Authors to have made his assertion good. See more of this *Wells's Geography*, Vol. I. pag. 116.

*Japhet's* second son is *Magog*, who has no posterity reckon'd to him by *Moses*: but in the other Scriptures there occur many occasions of mentioning the people of *Magog*; and agreeably to the Scripture situation of *Magog*, *Strabo*, l. ii. p. 618. <sup>See Bo-</sup> <sup>chart, l. 3.</sup> <sup>c. 13. &c</sup> <sup>Well's</sup> <sup>Geogr.</sup> <sup>Vol. I.</sup> mentions a country by the name of <sup>pag. 159.</sup> *Γωγαρεῖν*, *Gogarene*, being contiguous to *Albania*, and is the country now call'd *Georgia*, between the *Caspian* and *Euxin* Seas.

The third son *Madai* (without any mention of his children) no doubt, is the father of the *Medes*, and *Media*. See *Bochart*, l. 3. c. 14. and *Wells's Geogr.* pag. 164. The next mention'd son is *Javan*, of whom by and by, together with his children.

The fifth son *Tubal*; the sixth *Mesbeck*, of whom the *Μόχαι*, a people on the North of the *Euxin Sea* and *Palus Maeotis* is descended, and from them *Moscovia* and *Moscovites*. But it is not so easy to find out the Descendents of *Tubal*. *Josephus* cit. says, the *Iberi*, a people situate on the Eastern Coast of *Pontus Euxinus*, were antiently call'd *Thobelii*, from *Thobelus* or *Tubal*. See *Bochart*, l. 3. c. 12. *Wells's Geogr.* Vol. I. pag. 155.

*Tiras* or *Thiras* the seventh and last son of *Japhet*, who also has no sons numbered to him, is very reasonably suppos'd to be the father of the *Thracians*: for *Thrax*, which signifies a *Thracian* both in the *Greek* and *Latin Tongue*, is but a small variation from *Thiras*: and there are many plain footsteps in *Thrace*, or thereabouts, of this name; for *Mars* the *Thracian God* is call'd *Θερας*, *Thou-*

*ras* and *Thoures*, and *Thouros* by the Greeks. There was a River also bearing the name of *Thyras*, and *Athyras*, and other places of *Tyris*, &c. See *Bochart*, l. 3. c. 2.

I come now to the sons of *Gomer*, and grandsons of *Japhet*: of whom the first nam'd is *Ashkenaz*. *Strabo*, l. 14. pag. 778. makes mention of a Territory in *Mysha* call'd *Ascania*, and of a Lake there and a River of *Ascanius*: where likewise *Ascanius* was a common name of their principal men; so *Æneas*'s son was call'd *Ascanius*, which bears a manifest resemblance of *Gomer*'s son *Ashkenaz*, the father, as has been prov'd, having his settlement also in this Region. Some are of opinion, that *Pontus Euxinus* thus derives its appellation from *Ashkenaz*: the Greeks generally changing the names of places according to the *Grecian* accent, and sometimes to suit properly the name of the place itself, and yet to keep something of its primitive sound (a custom common to all living languages, as I shall take notice of by and by) formerly gave that great inland Sea the name of *Pontus Axenus*, "Αξενός, that is, *inospitable*,

*spitable*, by reason of the barbarity of the Borderers, who usually sacrific'd and fed upon all strangers that came that way: but when in after-times the inhabitants became civiliz'd and humane to travellers, the name of it was again new mol'ded into *Pontus*, *\*Εὐξενός*, *Euxinus*, or hospitable. See *Bochart*, l. 3. c. 9. It cannot be doubted but the country thereabouts was denoted by the name of *Ashkenaz* in the Scripture and among the Jews; for *Jeremiah* the Prophet speaking of *Cyrus's* expedition into *Asia Minor*, and of his reduction of *Babylon*, says, *Call together against her (Babylon) the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz*: Now that the Prophet meant here by *Ashkenaz*, the country here above spoken of, appears very probable from a fact attested by *Xenophon*, *Cyroped.* l. 7. pag. 148, 149. that *Cyrus*, after the taking of *Sardis*, sent *Hyastaspes* into *Pbrygia*, near the *Hellespont*, who brought with him a Body of that people arm'd, &c. to *Cyrus*, who plac'd them among his Troops, and led them back with him to *Babylon*.

c. 51. v.  
27.

The second of *Gomer's* sons is *Riphat*. *Josephus*, l. i. *Antiq.* c. 7. speaks of it as of a thing well known, that a People in his (and at this) time call'd *Paphlagonians* in *Asia Minor*, were antiently call'd *Riphatbeans*.

The third and last of *Gomer's* sons is *Togarma*, which the LXX Interpreters frequently write Θόργαμα and Τόργαμα, *Thorgama* and *Torgama*. Whence, by an easy and almost insensible change, comes *Trogma* and *Trochma*. *Strabo*, l. 12. pag. 662. says, the *Trocni* possess the confines of *Pontus* and *Cappadocia*. From hence I proceed to the

Second son of *Japhet*, to whom *Moses* numbers up a numerous Issue, is *Javan*. Some *Grecians* suppose that the name of *Ionia*, and *Ionians*, by which *Greece* and the *Grecians* in general are signify'd, is deriv'd from *Ion*, the son of *Xuthus*, nephew of *Deucalion*: and that the *Ionia* and the *Ionians* of *Asia Minor* took that appellation from a colony of the *Athenians* that settled there. But it is much more likely that the *Iones* and the *Ionians* of *Greece* were rather descended from the *Ionians* of *Asia Minor*, being more Eastward,

Eastward, who were the posterity of *Javan*. For it is very natural to conceive, that as *Japhet* the father's first settlement was in *Asia Minor*, after his separation from his brothers *Sem* and *Ham*, who remain'd in the more Eastern parts, and, as we have now seen very probable characters of *Gomer* and his sons placing their habitation in that country; so is it also most likely, that *Javan* did not withdraw to a very great distance from his brother *Gomer*, there being abundantly room enough for them all in that large and most fruitful Tract of Land. It is certain moreover, that in the Scripture style *Greece* is denoted by *Javan*; thus, *Dan.* xi. 2. speaking of the fall of the *Perſian Empire* by *Alexander*, says, *Bebold, there ſhall stand up yet three Kings in Perſia, and the fourth ſhall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he ſhall stir up all againſt the Realm of Grecia,* in the *Hebrew* it is, against the Realm of *Javan*, and the LXX Interpreters for *Javan* put Ἑλλώνες, *Greeks*. Which plainly gives us to understand, that the *Jews* understood the *Greeks* to be the posterity of *Javan*.

And

And it is not difficult to conceive how *Javan*, or, as the LXX Interpreters often write it, *Iouāv*, *Ioüan*, may by degrees be contracted into *Ion*. See *Bochart*, l. 3. c. 3. and *Wells*, vol. I. pag. 151.

*Javan's* eldest son is nam'd *Elishab*, of whose settlement I can meet with no satisfactory account. *Josephus* cit. will have the antient *Æoles* or *Æolians* in lesser *Asia*, to be descended from *Elishab*. *Hellas* in *Greece* seems to have a greater affinity to the name of *Elishab*.

*Tarshish*, the second of *Javan's* sons, beyond all question, fix'd his station at or near *Tarsus* in *Cilicia*, which even to this our time preserves his name almost without any alteration. A manifest indication to whom principally it owes its name. If the Reader is desirous to be further inform'd of the trading and ships of *Tarshish*, their colonies settled in *Spain*, &c. he may consult *Bochart*, l. 3. c. 7. and after him *Wells's Geogr.* vol. I. pag. 431.

The third son of *Javan* is *Chittim*; and it is certain, from 1 *Maccab.* i. 1. that the *Jews* look'd upon the *Macedonians* as the posterity of *Chittim*, at least their

their country to be so call'd from him. For the Author, speaking there of *Alexander* the Great, says, that he set out from the land of *Kerrieim*, *Ketteieim*, and c. 8. 5. styles *Philip* and *Perseus* kings of *Macedon*, Kings of *Kritow*, Chiteorum, where it is mark'd in the margin of the Bible, or *Macedonians*. Conformably to this *Hesychius* observes, that *Macedonia* went formerly by the name *Macetia*: and *A. Gellius*, l. 9. c. 3. cited by *Bochart*, l. 3. c. 5. calls *Philip*, *Macetia Rex*, King of *Macetia* or *Macedon*. There are indeed some Prophecies of the Scriptures which seem to signify the *Romans* by *Chittim*, as *Dan.* xi. 30. *Num.* xxiv. 24.

*l. i. c. 7.* *Ezek.* xxvii. 6. and *Josephus* thinks the isle of *Cyprus* to have been the lot of *Chittim*, and from him to have been originally call'd *Chethima*; and further observes, that a city of *Cyprus*, call'd by the *Greeks*, according to their custom of *wresting* and *moulding* the names of places, *Citium*. And, as it is well known, that many parts of *Italy* were at least new peopled by colonies from *Greece*, 'tis not unlikely but some of them might be of the posterity of *Chittim*, and give the name

From  
Chetteim.

name of their Progenitor to the colony or place of their settlement.

As to *Dodanim*, the youngest of *Javan's* sons, Authors do not agree about a People or Territory that was nam'd from him: and *Josephus* has left him out in his account. Some conjecture, that he did not remove far from his brethren, and are inclin'd to suppose on that account, that the *Dores* or *Dorians* of *Asia Minor* might be descended from *Dodanim* or *Dodan*; for the alteration of one single letter of *d* into *r* (which in *Hebrew* are near alike) changes *Dodan* into *Doran*, whence *Dorian*. Why also may we not say, that *Dodona*, a city of *Epirus*, near to which was the famous *Grove of Oaks*, sacred to *Jupiter*, was a derivation from *Dodanim*.

From this short account of *Japhet* and his sons, and of the Nations founded by them, I proceed, according to the order of *Moses*, to treat of

*Ham* (or *Cham*, as it is promiscuously written) the youngest of *Noah's* sons, and of the Nations begun by them, Gen. x. 6—20. *And the sons of Ham, Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan. And*

*the*

*the sons of Cush, Seba, and Havilah (or Chavilah) and Sabtah, and Raamah (LXX "Peypa, Regma) Sheba, and Dedan. And Cush begat Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one in the earth, a mighty hunter. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen, between Nineveh and Calah. And Mizraim begat Luddim, and Ananim, and Lehabim, and Naph-tulim, and Pathrusim, and Cafluhim (out of whom came Philistium) and Caphtorim. And Canaan begat Sidon his first-born, and Heth, and the Jebusite, and Emorite (or Amorite) and the Girgasite, and the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, and the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite (these possess'd the whole land of Judea on both the sides of Jordan.) These are the sons of Ham after their Families, after their Tongues, in their Countries, and in their Nations.*

Now it being no where specify'd where Ham himself fix'd his settlement (as is the case also of Japhet and Sem) we have

no particular place call'd by his name. But, as in the book of *Psalms*, the land of *Ham* signifies *Ægypt*, it is probable his chief residence was there. There was also very early a famous Temple that was erected in the confines between *Libya* and *Ægypt*, dedicated to *Jupiter Ammon*, or *Hammon*, which probably was first made sacred in honour of *Ham*, idolatry having begun early in *Ægypt*; whence, in after-times, the *Greeks* might name it *Jupiter-Ammon*, or *Hammon*, for *Jupiter* had as many names almost as there were countries or famous cities. But this, like many other particulars contain'd in the old *Grecian* Writings and History, is no more than conjecture, without sufficient foundation of a settled opinion. But the Historical Monuments, with relation to the sons of *Ham*, are more satisfactory. And,

I<sup>st</sup>. Concerning *Cush*, *Josephus's* testimony, l. i. *Ant.* c. 7. is very full, *viz.* that the *Æthiopians* were in his time known, and vulgarly call'd *Chuseans*, both by themselves (the *Æthiopians* in their own tongue) and the *Asiaticks* in general. In

Scripture the *Arabians* chiefly are denoted by *Cush*, from whom probably the *Aethiopians* derive their origin as well as their name. Near to *Cush* or *Arabia*, or in a part of it, the *Sabæans* (so nam'd from *Sebah* or *Sheba*, or from both) are plac'd by *Pliny*, viz. in the more Southern part of *Arabia*, along the Coast from the *Red Sea* to the *Persian Gulph*: and not far from hence *Ptolomy* and *Stephanus* make mention of a city, 'Ρεγμα, *Rhegma*, which is the name the LXX in Greek translate for *Raamah*; and the Hebrew רָם may be pronoun'd either way, according to the different way of articulating the gnain y in Hebrew. *Havilah* or *Chavilah*, a third son of *Cush*, transmitted his name to a people of *Arabia*, mention'd by *Strabo*, l. 16. p. 886. viz. *Chaultæi*. Concerning the other sons of *Cush*, *Sabtab*, *Sabtachab*, and *Dedan*, see *Bochart*, l. 4. c. 3, &c. and *Wells's Geogr.* vol. I. pag. 197, &c.

It follows in the text of *Moses*, *And Cush begat Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one, he was a mighty hunter, and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, &c.* *Nimrod* having greatly distinguish'd himself

self from his brethren by his ambitious attempts, *Moses* seems to treat of him as it were apart by himself, styling him *a mighty one, a mighty hunter*. The most antient Histories being in effect lost, and the account we have from the *Greeks* of the transactions of those primitive times, being extremely dark and imperfect, and miserably leavened with fable and contradiction, and different names also being many times given by different Authors to the same persons, hence arises almost an impossibility of forming any satisfactory idea of things done at that distance. And hence also it is that we meet with no distinct account of *Nimrod* (whom *Josephus* writes *Nabrodes*) in antient Histories. And again, hence it is that Modern Chronologists and other Writers run into a great contrariety of sentiments concerning many Articles of antient History. Some will have it, that *Nimrod* was the *Ninus*, and the *Belus* or God whom the *Babylonians* worshipp'd as the Founder of their Empire. Others form quite contrary conjectures. What chiefly relates to my purpose in this matter is, to observe that the first foundation of Rule

and Empire was laid at *Babylon*, conformably to what we learn from *Moses*. And in this, I believe, all Writers agree. And this is a very strong proof of the truth of *Moses's* System of the peopling of the Earth, and the foundation of Nations. And the singular character that *Moses* gives *Nimrod*, that *he was a mighty hunter*, is worth our notice: for it is not to be doubted, but his being active and valiant in hunting, drew after him great numbers of men; and his exploits in the destruction of wild and savage Animals, which began greatly to multiply, to infest the roads and passages, and to destroy great numbers of men and their cattle, render'd *Nimrod* very beneficial to civil society, and his name honourable; which easily furnish'd an active and bold spirit with a very proper occasion to exalt himself to some Rule and Authority over the commonalty of men, and by degrees to a settl'd and establish'd power, either by common consent, or by force. And this manner of becoming great and famous by valorous expeditions against savage and voracious animals, that render'd the ways unpassable, and their very

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dwellings dangerous, and of attaining the highest, even to divine honours, was frequently in after-times made use of by the Heroes of old, *Hercules*, *Theseus*, &c. See *Bochart*, l. 4. c. 12. and *Perizonius Orig. Babyl.* c. 12. pag. 233. and *Cicero*, l. 2. de *Nat. Deor.* p. 58, observes, *Immanes & feras belluas nanciscimur venando, ut & vescamur his, & exerceamur in venando ad similitudinem bellicæ disciplinæ: We hunt and catch huge and savage beasts both for our food, and for the exercise of a kind of martial discipline;* for this still continues and inures the body in the habit of hard and dangerous exercises, where not only courage and activity is necessary, but also wiles and stratagems, to prevent the escape of those fierce Animals.

I shall not enlarge on any proof concerning *Babel* and *Babylon*: every one is sufficiently acquainted with this particular; nor, for the same reason, concerning *Nineveh*: which is suppos'd to have been founded by *Ninus*; who, if he is not *Nimrod* himself (as some reasonably conjecture) he was very probably *Nimrod's son*, by reason of the great antiquity of that famous city. The text of *Moses*,

*Shinar includes that tract of land North and South of Babylon.* according to our translation, viz, *Out of that land* (Shinhar) *went forth Asshur and builded Nineveh*, seems to import, that *Asshur* the son of *Sem* was the founder of *Nineveh*. But this will not agree

with the account of *Moses* concerning the settlements of *Sem* and *Ham*, and *Nimrod's* adventures. The text shou'd rather be thus translated, that *Nimrod* (or *Ninus*) *went out of the land of Shinar* (where he had erected his first government) *into*

*So it is ex- Ashshur or Affyria, and seiz'd part of the press'd in possession of the sons of *Sem*, and extend-  
the mar- ed his dominion Northward, and built  
gin of the Bible. Gen.*

*x. 11. for Nineveh. See Bochart, l. 4. c. 12. As to Assur, it should be the places of Erech, Accad, and Calneh, read, into Affyria.*

*See Synop. the last or most Southern turning of the ad Gen. e. 10; 11. common channel of the Tigris and Eu-*

*pbrates; and Strabo, l. 11. pag. 619. men-  
tions a country near Babylon, nam'd Chaloni-  
tis, according to the Greek turn of Colneh. I do not find any plain footsteps of Accad. See Wells's Geogr. Vol. I. pag. 227. I proceed to*

*Mizraim the second son of Ham: and I shall content myself with Josephus's tes-  
timony, l. i. Ant. c. 7. that the Ægyptians*

tians are commonly known by the name of *Mezreans* amongst the inhabitants themselves, and are often so nam'd by Greek Authors. *Josephus* takes no notice of his sons, saying their names were lost in succeeding times ; we meet with some mention of some of them in the Scriptures. As to *Lehabim*, the third son of *Mizraim*, *Josephus* thinks that *Africa* derives its antient name of *Libya* from *Libys* or *Lehabim*. The third son of *Ham* is *Phut*; and *Josephus* says, that there is a people in *Africa* call'd *Phuti* or *Phutians*, and a river of that name in *Mauritania*. *Canaan*, the youngest of *Ham*'s sons, and his sons *Sidon* and *Heth*, &c. have left behind so manifest characters of their names, that 'tis needless to add any thing touching them and their possessions. Only it must be observ'd, that when the *Jews* under *Moses* and *Joshua* afterwards seiz'd their possessions according to the divine promise and predictions, that whole Land chang'd almost the whole System of its names, and receiv'd new ones from the *Jews*.

*Sem*, the third and last son of *Noah*, mention'd by *Moses*, had for his sons

*Elam*, and *Asshur*, and *Arphaxad*, and *Lud*, and *Aram*, Gen. x. 22, 23. From *Elam* came the *Elamites* or *Elymæi*, mention'd by *Strabo*, l. 16. pag. 855. on the East of *Babylonia*: and as *Isa.* xxii. 6. says, that *Elam bare the quiver*; and *Jer.* xlix. 35. *The Lord will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might*; so *Strabo*, pag. 860. takes notice that the *Elymai* were excellent Bowmen, and abounded with them, and liv'd on the spoil, pag. 859. *Asshur* and *Affyria*, or, as it is sometimes written, *Attyria*, is continually mention'd in history: and it is not to be doubted, but that a part of *Affyria*, antiently call'd *Arrapachitis* (chang'd probably from *Arphaxaditis*) mention'd by *Ptolemy*, derives its name from *Arphaxad*: and *Josephus* cit. says the *Chaldeans* were formerly call'd *Arphaxadeans*: and that the *Lydi* were formerly nam'd *Ludi*. The fifth and youngest son of *Sem*, *Aram*, transmitted his name to the people of the country now call'd *Syria*, who from him were before call'd *Arimi*, *Arimæi* and *Aramæi*, *Arimeans*, *Arameans*. *Homer Iliad.* B. v. 783, and *Hesiod Theog.* v. 304 speak of the *Arimi* as a people of this country;

country; and *Strabo*, l. 13. pag. 724. says, *Some take the Syrians to be the Arimi, (Arimians) whom now they call Aramos, (Arameans)* and l. 16. pag. 911. says, that *Homer mentions the Arimos, and takes them for the people of Syria, and perhaps, adds he, the Greeks call'd them Aramaeos or Arimos; for we find a great change of names chiefly among the Barbarians, of which he gives some instances.*

And thus I have briefly gone through the System of *Moses* concerning the foundation of Nations, and the peopling of the Earth by the sons of *Noah* and their posterity: and I hope my endeavour will have the same influence on the well-dispos'd Reader (especially if he takes the pains to examine it carefully) as it has on me, viz. a firm belief of the truth of what *Moses* has deliver'd. I know many things may be alledg'd by *sceptical* and prejudic'd men, in opposition to so strong a testimony of truth: as, that this way of argument consists chiefly of far-fetch'd resemblances, conjectural changes of letters in names, and suppositions of derivations from such particular Persons, &c. In answer to which, I will not deny that

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there is room, in some measure, for such replies, if men will be disputatious: But if they will impartially follow reason, and seriously consider the nature of things, I affirm such objections to have no just foundation. For, in arguments of this nature, we cannot require ocular and palpable evidence, as of things done before our eyes: the nature of government in general, and of mutual trust and faith in civil society, manifestly demonstrate the contrary, where a commonly approv'd and current report, and without contradiction to it, is, in all courts of judicature and civil intercourses between men of the same society, judg'd a full argument of the truth of facts. And nothing more is necessary to render a law obligatory, than that it be publish'd by men in authority, and that it be not contrary to reason nor religion, *i. e.* the law of God. And as Religion is in truth the divine Government, wherein Man is subject to the divine law, whether this be made known to him by his reason only, or by a special revelation of God, whenever any precept, as of God, is propounded to him by such a testimony, or such a proportion

tion of evidence, that he cannot but judge it highly probable, that such a precept is from God, he certainly is bound in conscience to receive and obey it as such: for the nature of our subjection to God is undoubtedly such, that when we have reason to be truly persuaded that God has spoken, it is our duty to believe and receive what is so spoken: and whatever is propounded to us by such a proportion of evidence that we cannot but judge that 'tis highly probable that God has spoken it, we have reason to be truly persuaded that God has spoken it: and by consequence we are in duty bound to believe and receive it. So to render political laws obligatory beyond excuse, no more is required than that they be publish'd at first in some of the most publick places of resort in the State; from whence they are communicated, by general report by creditable Persons, to the far greatest part of the Subjects; and so being continu'd to succeeding generations without a repeal, become obligatory to them also. Now to apply this to the present Subject:

I do not pretend that this account of Moses concerning the sons of Noah, bears

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the authority of a law (excepting to those who believe it done by the direction of the divine Spirit, as all good Christians do): but as to its credibility, it is founded on as strong an authority. For it was first publish'd by *Moses*, who was (as we upon strong evidences justly believe, the Minister of God to the *Jews*, appointed as such by divine Revelation; at least he was) the supreme Magistrate and Law-giver of the *Jews*: it was acknowledg'd by them as dictated by God, and it has continu'd ever since to be held as such by all succeeding generations of them to this very day, and from them communicated to us Christians, with a much stronger enforcement, by the confirmation of *Christ* himself. So that I cannot conceive how an Article of this nature, where ocular evidence cannot be had, can be supported with a more persuasive and urgent attestation; especially when we consider that the whole current of Antiquity, the plain testimony of aliens and strangers, and every other circumstance, so happily and justly corresponds to it.

As to the cavils above-mention'd, that the Argument of this fourth Section is chiefly

chiefly made up of far-fetch'd resemblances of names, of conjectural changes of letters in names, and suppos'd derivations from such and such Persons, variations in their names, &c. 1st. It is not altogether true; for there are many particulars, where there is no variation at all, as in *Mizraim* for the *Ægyptians*, *Cush* for the *Arabians*, *Asþur* or *Assur* for the *Affyrians*, *Arameans* for the *Syrians*, &c. But allowing that this were, in some measure, the case; yet, when we consider the reason of this, the difficulty vanishes. For universal experience demonstrates, that all living languages are continually subject to changes: that the same words are very different in different provinces where the same tongue is in use, and very differently accented: that by the conquest of arms the same country may be many times new peopled by a succession of foreign colonies, and consequently the primitive language of the country may either be wholly lost, or be greatly blended with a foreign medley of words and phrases: and lastly, that the country it self, its cities, rivers, &c. may receive new names, or at least the old ones may

be new molded, according to the termination and accent of the new prevailing tongue. So it happen'd to the Jews by the *Chaldeans* or *Babylonians*; thus again to these and the other *Eastern Nations* by the *Greeks*: and again to these by the *Romans* and *Latins*: and lastly, these shad with the former by the *Northern People*, *Scythians*, &c. And this was the case of our antient *Britons* from the *Saxons*, &c.

This being the real inconstant state of things, how is it possible to expect, that the very same names written by *Moses* in the tenth chapter of *Genesis*, shou'd continue invariably the same through such a vicissitude of different languages to these our days, or even to the birth of our Blessed Saviour? I think it rather a manifest token of God's providence over the world, that the same name passing through so many different organs and, as it were, molds, shou'd still preserve so near a resemblance to that of the first Founder's, in order to its becoming a plain monument of the truth of those things written by his servant *Moses*. And what is chiefly remarkable here, is, that the plain characters not of one only, but of almost all

the persons names contain'd in *Moses's* catalogue above-mention'd, are yet to be met with in histories of undoubted antiquity and fidelity, and which had no relation at all, by way of alliance or friendship, to the *Jewish* affairs. If but one or two of them had so stood out the waste of time, we might have been pendulous in our judgment whether such names were truly the relicts of the primitive ones, or rather of others that are accidentally found to have a resemblance to the primitive ones: but as the entire Roll of them is still remaining, no Appeal can, with any colour of reason, lie against it. I would farther add, that the great destructions of Libraries and Books, by the devastations of war, and the spite of a rude and barbarous people, is another irremediable misfortune learning and ancient knowledge in general labours under: whereby we are most unhappily depriv'd of an infinite number of monuments for the conviction of truth; and yet we cannot but perceive the divine Providence plainly visible in preserving the sacred volumes (against which, besides the general chances of conflagrations and devasta-

† tions,

tions, so many wicked stratagems and inhuman attempts have been set up to destroy them; in preserving, I say, the sacred volumes) and some other profane Authors, for a standing testimony to the divine truth of God's revelation to mankind to all succeeding generations. We may be able to form a judgment how beneficial such monuments might have been, had they escap'd such misfortunes, from those small fragments of some of them, that are preserv'd in *Josephus*, *Eusebius*, *Clemens Alex.* and other primitive Writers, as well *Greek* as *Roman*.

I will now conclude this Chapter with observing, that the arguments alledg'd in this and the foregoing one, seem to be so strong and powerful to make good the two first Articles of this my undertaking, that I am not aware of one objection that can, with any colour of reason, be form'd against them, except those which I have above consider'd, and, I think, solidly and effectually answer'd. Facts of history and of very antient date, are not capable of being prov'd by demonstrative arguments. Evident experience however demonstrates, that when such facts are transmitted to

us with such manifest and authentic (especially uncontradicted) attestations of truth, that there lies no well-grounded plea against them, they certainly demand our full assent, more especially when they have an immediate relation to God with regard to his divine will and commands communicated to us.

As to the first or fundamental Article, consider'd in the second Chapter, *viz.* That neither the present System of Nature, nor any integrant part of it, not one grain of matter, nor drop of water, cou'd possibly come into being, but by the sole will and power of God, my Arguments in proof of this are strictly demonstrative. And as to the Creation of the world, as describ'd by *Moses*, my discourse concerning it seems to be manifestly, at least sufficiently, conclusive; and the plain characters of truth attending it, *viz.* *Chorography*, *Chronology*, and the *Peopling the Earth*, have been, I am persuaded, unexceptionably prov'd. It remains, that I shut up at last this Chapter with the title of it, That the books of *Moses*, with respect to these particulars, deserve and call for our ready belief of, and full assent to them.

## C H A P. IV.

1st. *It is possible for God to reveal himself and his will to man in a more perfect manner, than they are made known to him by the works of the Creation, or by natural light.* 2dly. *Such a revelation is not unworthy of God; on the contrary, is a token of great goodness, and highly beneficial to frail man.* 3dly. *The books of Moses do contain such a revelation of God and his will to man, and more especially to the Jews, and sundry prophecies, which were literally fulfilled in their proper season.*

**T**H E two first Articles in the title of this Chapter are to me *postulata*, that is, propositions so clear, that they are, and must be receiv'd by all men. For the mind of man being every way bounded and finite, he cannot acquire at once all the knowledge he is capable of, but by degrees only, as objects come within his sphere of action: and here

here also his knowledge of such objects is more or less perfect and distinct, as they approach nearer to his discerning faculty: all which necessarily supposes that there may be objects of his knowledge, of which at present he has no knowledge at all, because not plac'd within his sphere of action. Hence the divine Nature and Attributes being infinite, and the far greatest part of the works of God very distantly remov'd beyond the line of man's sphere of perception, our bounded intellect can neither of itself arrive at any comprehensive knowledge of the divine essence and perfections, nor at any knowledge of those works of the Creation, which are too distant from us. It would therefore be manifestly absurd to imagine it impossible, that God shou'd by a divine revelation impart to man a more clear and extensive knowledge of his divine Nature, or of those celestial Spirits he makes use of for his Attendants, and the execution of the divine decrees, or communicate even a more clear and affecting knowledge of the Laws of nature and morality, than man of himself can attain. For besides, that such a revela-

tion evidently implies no contradiction; which however must be prov'd, to evince the impossibility of it: I say, besides that such a revelation implies no contradiction, it is highly conformable to reason. For has the Creator of the mind of man so empty'd his power in the formation of it, as to furnish it at once with all that knowledge, and with all those degrees of knowledge it is capable of? On the contrary, we daily experience that the mind of man is susceptible of continual improvements, and of acquiring new kinds and further degrees of knowledge by assiduous labour, and by the instruction of teachers in all arts and sciences. It is therefore a manifest absurdity to question the power of God of supplying this labour and this instruction, and of communicating much greater degrees of extensive knowledge, by divine inspiration or revelation, than man by the strength of his own faculties or industry cou'd attain to.

If we will but cast a superficial eye upon the state of mankind, when the divine benignity had as yet shed no rays of reveal'd knowledge upon it, we shall easily

easily observe what monstrous opinions and sentiments unassisted reason had fall'n into. The most learned of the Philosophers have advanc'd very absurd positions, and suggested and encourag'd practices plainly contrary to reason and the good of society: they were uncertain and doubting with regard to the most *necessary* and *important truths*, such as the *immortality of the soul, and a future state; rewards and punishments after death; a certainly true and acceptable worship of God, and repentance for sins*. The Heathens, for want of the light of revelation, were involv'd in utter darkness, as appears by their continual practice of the most filthy defilements of the body, even in their religious appointments, as the *Bacchanalia*, the *Eleusinian Rites*, those of *Venus*, and many others; they moreover for a long time imbrued their hands in human Sacrifices, and by publick authority establish'd in their *Circus's*, or *Theatres, Shows and Spectacles*, where, for the diversion of the Citizens, often-times, at the request of Harlots, Favourites, &c. *Gladiators* tortur'd and murder'd one another; and others were led

forth to combat with savage beasts, and many times were devour'd by them; even Masters of familes had the power of life and death over their children, sometimes with less mercy than we have over our working cattle. In a word, Men in all places imagin'd and set up *Deities* to worship according to fancy and caprice. Can any thing be more shocking to reason, more feelingly demonstrate the miserable weakness of reason, when left to itself? Can any thing afford a stronger argument of the mercy and benignity of God to *fall'n Man*, than God's revealing himself, his divine will, a true and acceptable worship of him, and an acceptable method of regaining the divine favour, when forfeited by any wickedness; God's opening the eyes of the blinded world to see and detest the absurdities of Idol-worship, and the adoration of false Deities, the impious inhumanity of human Sacrifices and Murders, and of all kinds of Impurities? Lastly, Can any thing so strongly paint out to us the exceeding necessity Mankind labour'd under of some blessed light from above to dispel this heathen darkness, to mark out the safe and sure path

of virtue by the glorious light of revelation, and fix in the minds of men a horror and detestation of the heathen impieties and abominable worship, by plainly demonstrating their extreme deformity to reason, and by denouncing the most heavy vengeance of God upon all those that put them in practice?

Nothing therefore can be more evident, than that 'tis not only possible for God to reveal to man a more distinct and extensive knowledge of his divine Nature, of the divine Will, and of the works of Nature, but that such a revelation is highly worthy of God, and a pledge of infinite goodness, as being highly beneficial to his frail creature, and contributing to give us more exalted ideas of the *Deity* itself, and in our religious capacity to direct us to a more acceptable worship and adoration of the *supreme Being*, and to discern more perfectly those dangerous paths which lead to destruction. And this possibility of divine revelation is not only manifest in itself, but, in effect, has been held as actually vouchsaf'd unto men by not only *Jews* and *Christians*, but by the unanimous consent of all

Nations, as appears manifest from all the Writings, whether *Greek* or *Latin*, of the heathen world, which are often too prolix in their accounts of the particular favours of *Jupiter* and the other *Gods* at certain times, when they stood in need of them.

It may perhaps be objected against the second Article, that a truth, suppos'd to be reveal'd for the purpose of Religion, is either necessary to man in his religious capacity, or it is not necessary. If it is necessary, it will follow, that before men were favour'd with that extraordinary grace, they were left destitute of some knowledge necessary to their state. If it is not necessary, revelation seems to be a superfluous work, and therefore unworthy of God. But this is an objection of little moment; and I mention it rather for the purpose of explaining the nature of that divine revelation, which mankind, by the great goodness of God, has been bless'd with. And in order to this, we are to consider *man* in general as a mixt Being, compos'd of an intellectual substance, *i.e.* of a *Soul*, and of a *Body*, endow'd with suitable faculties and properties,

ties, as *apprehension, understanding and will, sense, appetites, &c.* in order to enjoy the benefits of life, and the blessings God has bestow'd upon him; to render himself also useful and beneficial to his fellow-creature; but principally by directing his whole behaviour according to the dictates of reason, to acknowledge God to be the Author of his being, and of every good thing he is possess'd of, to exercise an awful obedience to those precepts of God he is appriz'd of by the light of nature, and to render him a religious worship and adoration in proportion to that light that is in him. This is the natural state of mankind, consider'd in itself, antecedent to the benefit of divine revelation: And God requires from men, under this condition of Nature, no other behaviour than what is suitable to their knowledge in it; and the rewards and punishments are, no doubt, justly proportion'd to such their behaviour. And, as all the works of God are perfect according to their kind, so mankind, under this (unfavour'd, as I may term it) As compar'd with condition of life, were furnish'd with all revelation.

powers

Arguments *in Proof of*  
powers and advantages necessary to the  
duties of it.

But then we are further also to consider, that as Man is a rational *Agent*, so he is absolutely free with relation to his conduct in life: and as he has inherent in him a variety and diversity of sensual appetites, it may come to pass, that sometimes he may follow the sound dictates of reason in the exercise of his freedom; sometimes he may suffer himself to be oversway'd and misled, by his sensual appetites, into actions repugnant to his reason and his duty; which, in fact, was the case of the *Antediluvians*: in whom sense by degrees prevailing over the more spiritual directions of the mind, it soon came to pass that *all flesh universally corrupted its way*; that sin and wickedness, by frequent relapses, and mutual wicked examples of men, became familiar and habitual, and at length, that mankind utterly degenerated from their original innocence and purity into a state of almost remediless corruption of heart and mind, and forgetfulness of God. And this was also the case almost of mankind even

even after the *Flood*, about the time of *Abraham's call* from *Ur of the Chaldees*; compare *Gen. xi. 31.* and *xii. 1.* and *xxxii. 30. Jofb. xxiv. 2, 3.* But this universal corruption and degeneracy of human nature did not befall mankind through any defect of the necessary means of knowing their duty, or of power to fulfil it, but purely through their own giving way to carnal lusts, and neglecting the wise and salutary monitions of reason, and to make use of those means.

Thus God having plac'd man in a state of probation, sufficiently capacitated for the purpose of a rational and virtuous conduct of life, that he might make tryal how far he wou'd make use of the endowments of nature and other outward blessings to the honour of God that gave them, and seeing him by degrees utterly fall away, and now lost from the end he was design'd for, God (I say) out of his boundless goodness towards man, purpos'd to enter upon new and more merciful engagements and covenants with mankind, and raise man to a more gracious condition than that he was in before; but still, so as that he was to continue

tinue in a state of tryal and probation, tho' under the influence of more powerful helps, and more enlivening prospects: and this was by communicating to him a more clear and distinct knowledge of himself, and of his will, and of the great and glorious ends he design'd him for; which was in some sort begun with *Noah*; but which was more particularly carry'd on through *Abraham* and his immediate posterity; and yet more fully through *Moses*, during the course of his ministry, thro' *David* and the *Prophets*; but in a most absolutely perfect manner, by a divine Messenger sent from God's right hand, our Blessed Redeemer *Jesus Christ*. This is a very short abstract of God's dealing with mankind under his several states of life, which I shall have occasion

Ch. 6. & 7. to treat of more particularly hereafter, and which is manifestly consonant to reason, worthy of the supreme *Being*, as he is infinitely good, and highly beneficial to us his frail creatures.

I took notice a little before, that God plac'd Man in a state of probation, *that he might make tryal of his behaviour in it:* but this *tryal* was not on God's account,

who,

who, from all eternity, has a most absolute and perfect knowledge of all future events, and needs no *tryal* for the sake of experimental knowledge: it was purely therefore for the sake of Man himself; namely, that succeeding generations, observing into how wicked a degeneracy their forefathers had fall'n through their own neglect and abuse of those means afforded them for the purpose of a rational and virtuous course of life, and how powerful a vengeance the Almighty had executed upon them for it, might thence-forwards grow more diffident in themselves, more fearful and cautious in their doings, and give the greater heed to the solid prescripts of reason; but above all, that when the divine goodness shou'd impart to them new light from above, and illustrations of their understanding, and establish a new law and covenant among them, deliver'd by the mouth of God himself in a most stupendous but gracious manner, that then, I say, they might cleave the more stedfastly to and fulfil it: and from a true sense of awful gratitude and reverential love, make this their first and principal concern in this life. And this

this is a plain instance both of the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God to mankind in general. But it may perhaps be yet further

Objected. If God so perfectly fore-knew that Man wou'd so generally fall away into gross wickedness, and draw upon himself the divine wrath and vengeance for it, why was human nature molded with such an unhappy mixture, that the generality of men wou'd always live and continue undutiful to their Almighty Creator, and thereby become the objects of his fierce indignation, and render themselves utterly miserable? How does this accord with infinite *wisdom*, or infinite *goodness*?

- I shou'd think St. Paul's most emphatical expostulation the most apposite and solid answer to this objection, *Nay, but who art thou, O Man, that repliest against God! Shall the thing form'd say to him that form'd it, Why hast thou made me thus? O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*
- Mat. 20. 15.* God can surely do what he will with his own: And as we plainly see this to be the case

case in fact, we are sure that infinite *wisdom* and infinite *goodness* intended it for excellently *wise* and *good* purposes. Neither are we left without a sufficient witness of this from pure reason itself. For I declare myself so far a *Free-thinker*, that I will not receive any proposition, either of natural or reveal'd Religion, which may not be supported by pure reason. For God is reason and truth itself; all his operations are most perfectly agreeable to reason and truth; and certainly God requires no article of Religion to be receiv'd, no precept to be put in practice, but what is perfectly conformable even to our reason. But lest this way of answering, taken from St. *Paul*, shou'd be thought by some men a meer evasive solution, I will endeavour to give a more regular and direct answer to the objection.

And I readily grant and assert, that God did most certainly foresee that his creature *Man* wou'd by degrees be quite led away into a dissolute and abandon'd wickedness, and that he wou'd be most dreadfully destroy'd for it. And yet this notwithstanding, the creation of man is

both

both consistent with infinite *wisdom* and infinite *goodness* too. For to retort the objection upon the objector himself, I require to know of him in my turn, Why did not God mold all his creatures into the most perfect Beings? Why is the Universe compos'd of an infinite multiplicity of creatures, some greatly inferior to others in the excellence and usefulness of their nature? What other reason can be conceiv'd for this, but the freedom of God in the choice and use of his Almighty power, which principally is manifested by such a multiplicity of Beings, which make up the system of nature; which, had it consisted only of one kind of the most perfect Beings, or of different ones, all of like excellence and perfection, wou'd have argu'd the unbounded power of God to have been really bounded and confin'd within certain limits, to have been streighten'd in his divine operations, and debarr'd of an absolute freedom in the use of his power. And furthermore, I might require to be inform'd, what standard of excellence and perfection was to be imagin'd and stated, according to which each particular work was to be modell'd?

modell'd? Whereas, on the contrary, taking the whole fabrick of the Universe as it came forth from the hands of the all-powerful Architect, the infinite diversity of *inanimate, animate* and *rational Beings* wonderfully express and declare the boundless power of God, and render the System of nature a most absolutely perfect workmanship worthy of God; the very minutest or least perfect of his creatures being an evident effect of Almighty power.

But to confine my thoughts to the particular species of mankind alone, since the absolute freedom and unboundedness of the divine power is more evidently demonstrated by the infinite diversity and multiplicity of creatures, according to their difference and variety of greater and less perfections, why shou'd Man in particular be exempted from this general rule, so highly tending to the honour and majesty of God? Why shou'd he at once be unalterably fix'd in his *Apogæum* or Summit of perfection, and be endu'd with the excellent power of reason and freedom of action, and be debarr'd the natural privilege of making use of it by an honest and studious endeavour to improve the talents God had so graciously bestow'd

upon him to the honour of the Giver of them, and by a dutiful subjection and obedience to the divine Will, to obtain a still greater share of the divine favour? 'Tis true, the supposition of freedom of action consequently infers a power of abusing it to the dishonour of God, and to the ruin of the free Agent. But this cannot be made an objection against the *wisdom* or *goodness* of God: Because the divine *wisdom* has stupendously display'd itself in the extent and excellent contrivance of the whole Creation: and with relation to Man in particular, before the blessing of a divine revelation was vouch-saf'd unto him, in a just and benevolent proportion establish'd betwixt the means and the end propos'd to him, viz: in creating man with such excellent faculties and other outward advantages, whereby he is enabled plainly to discern and acknowledge that divine *Being*, from whom he receiv'd them; in encouraging him by the fruitful seasons of the year, and plentiful productions of the earth, to walk according to the natural law written in his heart, and render to God a grateful tribute of honour and worship; in deterring him from disobeying that eloqu.

law, and from a neglect of his religious duty by the dreadful effects of his power, manifested in the thunder and clouds above, in withholding the kind influences of the early and latter rain, and many other ways terrible to and greatly afflictive of us his creatures here below; and moreover, by the hopes and apprehensions of the divine power in a future state, which I am persuaded (I mean the belief or expectation of a survivance after this mortal life) to have always been strongly impress'd on the minds of men, tho' not in so distinct and confirm'd a manner as since the Christian revelation.

The *Goodness* of God is likewise manifestly engag'd in the creation of man, by enriching him with many worldly blessings, by exalting him far above all other terrestrial Beings, on account of the noble endowments of his mind, by which he is render'd capable not only to bear rule over all other creatures, and to provide for himself the necessaries, conveniences and comforts of this life, but, by a dutiful subjection to God, to become the object of the divine favour and further rewards, and an instrument of the divine glory. Which is a consideration

so greatly tending to the honour of our species, that no words can sufficiently express the great goodness of God towards us in that behalf. So that, according to this disposition of divine Providence concerning man, he has it in his own breast to chuse whether by a dutiful and religious behaviour he will contribute towards the continuance in and increase of his happiness, and the hope of some further signal recompence, which the supreme Governor and Judge of all things has in his power to bestow upon those that truly love and faithfully serve him: or for the sake of some momentary joys, or meer present advantages, run the risk of his fierce wrath and avenging power. Thus, if we impartially consider the whole divine disposition concerning man, it is perfectly consistent both with infinite *wisdom* and infinite *goodness*. And tho' as the objection rightly observes, the far greater part of men have, by their own fault, render'd themselves utterly miserable, by becoming obnoxious to the indignation and dreadful judgments of God, yet this cannot be laid as a charge against the divine *wisdom* or *goodness*: not against the former, because, as has been said, the

means and encouragements provided were abundantly sufficient to render them happy; even the terrors, they afterwards underwent, were laid before them to affright them into the road to happiness: nor against the latter, because God purely intended the happiness of man, but so, that man himself shou'd have a share in the purchasing it, as the praise, honour and fruit of his own labours. What can be more agreeable to reason? But to this it may be reply'd:

That the divine *wisdom* and *goodness* wou'd have much more eminently appear'd in favour of man, had he been created with such a perfect understanding and clear knowledge of God and of his whole duty, together with such an absolute command over his sensual appetites, that it cou'd hardly have been possible for him to have fail'd in any part of his duty and obligation to God. *Answer.* The edge of this difficulty has been taken off by what I have said in answer to the foregoing objection. I shall however add a more particular solution of it here, to serve as a full explication of this matter. I will not therefore deny, that, considering only in general the happiness of man

himself, what is suggested in the Reply may perhaps be true. But yet such an happiness of man falls greatly short of that happiness, which might be appointed as a reward for dutiful services, and a regular conduct of life, amidst difficulties and tryals; where the remembrance of, and reflection on many past dangers surmounted, and powerful enemies overcome, greatly enhances the glory and joy of such a state of final recompence. But in our consideration of the creation of Man, we are not to streighten our thoughts to what will be most agreeable to him, or to what is purely for his happiness in general, we ought likewise, at least equally, to consider the Creator himself, how far his honour and person is concern'd in the formation and condition of his creatures. And here it immediately occurs to us, that God is not only the *Creator*, but likewise the *Governor* of all things, to whose will essentially all creatures are subject in their proper natures and stations. Now, to the dignity and office of a Governor, it properly appertains to administer justice, and distribute rewards and punishments with an impartial hand, to exercise acts of mercy and forgiveness towards his children.

dren or subjects, as occasion may require, and to incourage the good to persevere in well-doing by the promise or hope of certain rewards, and deter the wicked from doing or continuing in evil by the awful dread of powerful and avenging chastisements. Now, in the supposition that every *rational Being* shou'd be actu-  
ated by a kind of necessity of nature only to do good, not having it properly in his power to do evil, those most excellent divine Attributes of *Justice, Goodness, Mercy*, even of *Wisdom* itself, as relative to Government, wou'd be utterly desti-  
tute of proper objects to act upon, and thereby become *not-necessary*, and by con-  
sequence no part of the divine or *necessary* perfections. Hence therefore it is very evident, that the present condition of hu-  
man nature, as compos'd of a contrariety of wills and desires, with an absolute free-  
dom of action, i. e. of doing well or ill, is not only perfectly consistenter with infi-  
nite *wisdom* and *goodness*, but that these, and other divine Attributes, as *Justice, Mercy, &c.* cou'd hardly subsist in any other supposition, because no power nor virtue can be conceiv'd without their proper objects. For instance, What ex-

ercise can there be of *Justice* and *Mercy*, where there are no tryals nor difficulties, no capacity of evil-doing? How can punishments be justly inflicted, where no one can deserve them? How can God be *merciful*, where there can be no failure in duty, nor return to it by repentance? In a word, What reason is there to suppose that God shou'd so place a rational Being in an establish'd and unchangeable state of happiness without its own concurrence towards it? It is in all reason sufficient, that in the creation of Man, God intended and propos'd to him happiness, *viz.* the prosperous enjoyment of the good things of this life, and of some further happiness in a future state; see pag. 162, 163. that he mark'd out for him the path to it; that he provided for him effectual powers and means to arrive at and obtain it (tho' with tryal and difficulty) and that he awaken'd his endeavours from slackening in the progresst towards it, by discovering to him the dreadful precipices he must inevitably fall into, if he turn'd aside from it; namely, the just vengeance of God. From all which considerations nothing seems more manifest, than that the primitive condition of human nature

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(I mean, as antecedent to all divine revelation) is perfectly reconcileable to the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God; and, in truth, more desirable to all those that duly make use of the means to arrive at that happiness intended by God for those that faithfully serve him, because it is the fruit and recompence of their labours, and which will always be the greater and more excellent in proportion to their pious endeavours to obtain it. And with regard to those men, that for the sake of sensual delights, or some unjust and unlawful temporal advantages, infringe the divine laws written in their hearts, and reject the means provided to arrive at that happiness they were really design'd for, and thereby draw down upon themselves certain destruction, they cannot complain of the unhappiness of human nature; it cannot be argu'd on their account, as repugnant to the divine *wisdom* or *goodness*: since that unhappiness befals them purely by their own fault, as plainly appears from the contrary fate of the virtuous; and that as the divine *wisdom* and *goodness* appear illustrious in the bounteous recompence bestow'd upon the Righteous, so the divine *Justice*, *Wisdom* and *Power*, as

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eminently display themselves in the terrible vengeance exercis'd upon the *Wicked*, in order to set them as dreadful examples for the discouragement and terror to all impiety and neglect of duty to God. And this we see to be the practice of all well-order'd governments, no one complaining of the rigorous punishments awarded against all violators of the Laws essential to the good and safety of Civil Society. Upon the whole matter therefore, it appears sufficiently evident, that notwithstanding the unhappy fall of man, the condition of human nature, as prior to divine revelation, does by no means derogate from, or is inconsistent or irreconcileable with the infinite *wisdom* and *goodness* of God.

But notwithstanding the above-mention'd System of human nature, and the means provided for man's progress in the path of virtue towards happiness, we know, to our sorrow, that he did not long continue in the state of rectitude and subjection to the Law written on the tables of his heart; and that having once open'd a passage to transgression and sin, an inundation of wickedness soon forc'd its way, and widen'd the breach already made; whereby the superior faculties and powers

powers of the mind became, by an unhappy degeneracy, strangely weaken'd, and, as it were, sunk into carnal lusts. So that in conclusion mankind had utterly lost its way to happiness by forsaking the path of virtue, the only way to it. In consequence of which, a most surprizing instance of the divine *wisdom, goodness and mercy* is vouchsaf'd to man; God condescends to manifest himself to him in a peculiar manner, to impart to him new illustrations of his understanding, new and more sublime notices of himself, and of his divine will, and of proper means and helps to escape from his seemingly irrecoverable state of destruction, with stupendous effects of his divine *Power*, to imprint on his mind a stronger and more lasting attention to those things that shou'd be made known to him. This unspeakable blessing and grace of God's revealing himself to man, was not fully display'd and unfold'd all at once; it began at first by imperfect and smaller degrees, as men were then capable of it, and afterwards enlarg'd itself by regular and gradual portions, till a proper season came for the delivery of a complete *System of Laws and Ordinances* by the ministry of Moses,

to be a standing direction to their civil and social conduct, and for the performance and celebration of their religious worship and solemn sacrifice of the Temple. This indeed was a most gracious dispensation of divine providence vouch-saf'd in a singular manner to the people of the Jews, descendants from the *faithful Abraham*, the great Patriarch or Father and Pattern of all true Believers; and it continu'd through a long period of many generations, excepting some interruptions for the punishment of their rebellion against God; during which period the divine Spirit, at sundry times, manifested itself, by the various predictions of the holy Prophets, foretelling and causing them to expect the appearance of a mighty Deliverer, who shou'd reduce all Nations under his subjection, and be the Founder of a new and universal *Law* and *Covenant*, under which all kingdoms and ranks of men unexceptionably were to be comprehended. God, by this method continually working and preserving an uninterrupted chain of a most gracious Providence over men, till the glorious appearance of the divine *Luminary* of the world, the long desir'd and expected of all Nations,

tions, our Blessed Redeemer *Jesus Christ*, who was born and executed the divine charge and ministry of his *Messiahship*, according to the foregoing prophecies concerning him ; and having sufficiently promulg'd, establish'd and confirm'd the last new reveal'd Law of God, by his preaching, by his most heavenly life and conversation, and by the operation of numberless miracles and prodigies for an infallible testimony of his mission, and by the most salutary and meritorious sacrifice of himself, made a full atonement for the sins of the whole world, with his preaching, and that of his Apostles, seal'd up for ever all Prophecy and reveal'd Law ; that by him deliver'd being to continue thro' all generations to the end of the world. This lasting series of divine revelation was, and is not only possible beyond all contradiction, but an invaluable grace and blessing to mankind, as I have undertaken, by the blessing of God, to make good through the remaining course of my present endeavour. And in order to it I proceed, in the 3d place, To make good the third Article of this Chapter, That a divine revelation has been actually imparted to men,

as we have it deliver'd in the books of Moses. But before I enter upon the argument, I think it convenient to settle this point, *viz.* What kind of proof is necessary to be made use of on such a subject. A repeated divine revelation to every different person surely cannot be requir'd to confirm the truth of a former one: for this wou'd excuse all men from receiving any reveal'd truth or precept, which shou'd not be in particular reveal'd to himself, and by consequence wou'd suppose it impossible for God to establish amongst men a positive System of reveal'd Laws for the direction of mankind, which cou'd oblige any but those to whom it was especially and expressly reveal'd. Than which nothing can be more contrary to government in general, and to the providence of God, who, in the government of the world, makes use of second Causes as instruments, and of men as his ministers, to execute his divine purposes, and make his will known to men. Neither can it be requir'd that God shou'd work over again the same or other prodigies in testimony of the truth of a former reveal'd Article; for this splits upon the same absurdity just mention'd, and, in the supposi-

sition of a reveal'd Religion obligatory to mankind in general, this wou'd multiply miracles beyond all imagination, and without any real necessity; and moreover, such an assertion as this wou'd bring down the divine Rule and Power over men much below the dignity of a common Lawgiver or Magistrate, whose laws and ordinances become obligatory to all subjects, when solemnly promulg'd by persons thereunto appointed; and their obligation continues, till repeal'd by the same authority that first gave them their sanction.

b What therefore is necessary and sufficient to oblige any one to receive a truth or precept, as aforetime reveal'd of God? I answer, That when such a truth is conformable to reason, tends plainly to the good of mankind, and has an uninterrupted testimony of all Ages from the time it was first reveal'd (I mean reveal'd with the evident characters of divine power, as miracles, &c.) this is undoubtedly sufficient to persuade and oblige any one to receive it as a divine Truth and Law of God. So that to prove unexceptionably that the *Law of Moses* was reveal'd by God, no other labour is incumbent on me, than to evince that the law itself is

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conformable to reason, tends plainly to the good of mankind, and has an uninterrupted testimony of all Ages from the time it was reveal'd, being attested by miracles, and that the Books, wherein that *Law* is transmitted to us, are genuine. And this will manifestly appear by a fair and impartial consideration of this matter. For,

*1st.* The principal matters contain'd in those *Books* are conceiv'd in plain and simple terms, in an artless style calculated purely for the delivery of truth, and the instruction of men; a method of writing not unworthy of God, but far to be preferr'd before the soft and affected dresses of soothing Rhetoric, or the Romantic flights and delusive harmony of poetic strains; which rather entertain and amuse, than benefit the Reader, and too often, by their false charms, entice him into paths that lead to destruction. For, as *Lactantius* justly observes, the *Philosophers*, as men of polite learning, cou'd write and speak well, but not the truth: And that the things reveal'd in the Scriptures, are express'd in few and simple terms, because

1. 3. init.  
de falsa  
sap.

*Cujus est non argu-  
mentari sed pro-  
nuntiare verum.*

2dly. The Truths and Laws reveal'd in the *Mosaic Covenant*, evidently tend to the perfecting human nature in virtue and holiness; and not one of the miracles mention'd in it, but was wrought for some excellent purpose, and for the good of mankind. But more especially, one great intent of those Books, and of the Prophets, seems to be to preserve and carry on a continu'd series of divine revelation (as I shall show, ch. 6.) from the beginning of time down to the folding up of that divine intercourse by *him that was to come*, our Divine Saviour *Jesus Christ*, who was the fulfilling of all divine revelation.

From this general view of the books of *Moses*, I proceed to a more particular consideration of some of the more remarkable events, foretold and accomplish'd as express'd in the said books. The general *Deluge*, Gen. vi. 13. &c. was before reveal'd to *Noah*, and came to pass, ch. vii. and the following events of re-peopling the world by his sons, exactly correspond to the truth of it. To *Abraham* a son in his old age is promis'd, ch. xv. 4. and xvii. 16. and the birth of *Isaac*, ch. xxi. 2. soon verify'd the prediction. *Abraham* was also forewarn'd, that his posterity shou'd be held in bondage in *Egypt* a certain term of years, ch. xv. 13,

16. after which time it was to be set at liberty, and possess the fruitful land of *Canaan*, ch. xii. 7. all which was minutely accomplish'd beyond all contradiction. After the *Israelites* (the posterity of *Abraham*) had enjoy'd a peaceable possession of that *pleasant Land*, they became wanton and rebellious against God, and forsook, in great measure, the laws of their forefathers, the observance of which was their chief bulwark against their enemies, and the foundation of their security and happiness; I say, after this they were at sundry times premonish'd, that for their unrestrain'd wickednesses and rebellion against God, they shou'd be forcibly ejected and driven away from their darling possessions, their temple and cities shou'd be consum'd by fire and sword, and they themselves, their princes and nobles, shou'd be carry'd away captives into a strange and foreign land for the space of 70 years; and that after a just punishment of their national sins, they shou'd be restor'd to their native country; which, tho' little heed was given to it, punctually came to pass according to the letter of the prediction, *Jer.* xxv. 8-11. *Ezra* i. 1. In conclusion, besides the many prophetic warnings contain'd in the holy Scriptures, concerning a final and most

most dreadful destruction to be brought upon them for their unbounded transgressions (see *Deut.* xxviii. 47–57. *Hosea* iii. 4. *Dan.* ix. 26, 27.) a last summons is deliver'd to them containing a prophetic denunciation, *Mat.* xxiv. *Mar.* xiii. *Luk.* xxi. and xix. 41–44. that for the punishment of their irreclaimable impieties and utter incorrigibility (*Mat.* xxiii. 34–39.) and more especially for their invincible obstinacy and malice against our Blessed Redeemer, and their fierce persecution and murder of him, the last Divine Messenger, Prophet and Law-giver from heaven, their Temple, of which they so much boasted, and was their chief delight, their invincible safeguard against the complicated powers of the Nations round about them, even this most *holy place*, their *glory* and *strength*, shou'd be profan'd, sack'd and laid even with the ground, their cities and habitations destroy'd and left desolate, and themselves finally dispers'd and scatter'd among all Nations, as vagabonds without a law, without an *Ephod*, a prince, and without all seeming hope of a redemption from so abandon'd a slavery. Of all which we our selves are in great part witness at this very day: These are facts very plainly recorded in the books of *Moses* and

the holy Scriptures, and fully verify'd as there related, supposing the authority and veracity of those books. It therefore now only remains, that I endeavour to alledge as strong and convincing proofs for the authority and genuineness of them as such a subject is capable of. And, I think, the arguments on this behalf are as strong as is possible; For,

1. The truth of this was scarce ever once call'd in question by any one Author or other Person of gravity and solid judgment, that was sufficiently acquainted with the books of the holy Scriptures. *Apion* the Grammarian indeed made an effort to debase and vilify the antiquity and the laws and customs of the Jews. But *Josephus* has more than abundantly demonstrated him to be a writer of scurrility and falsehood, and worthy of the lowest contempt, in his two books against *Apion*.

2. The Persian kings, *Cyrus* (*Josephus Ant.* l. 11. c. 1, 4.) *Darius* (c. 4, 5.) *Artaxerxes* (c. 6.) and after them *Alexander the Great* (c. 8.) the *Ptolemy's* (2d Book against *Apion*, where he mentions a pillar at *Alexandria* erected by *Cæsar's* order, in memory of the privileges granted by him to the Jews) *Pompey* (l. 14. c. 8.) *Cæsar* (c. 16.)

*Augustus*

*Augustus* (l. 16. c. 10.) *Claudius* (l. 19. c. 4.) All these Princes and States successively testify'd a singular regard for the laws, religion, and nation of the *Jews*, as *Josephus* incontestibly demonstrates from the records and monuments he refers to in the places above quoted; some of them having establish'd large funds for the temple sacrifices, out of a reverential veneration for the God of the *Jews*; and the continuance of the *Jewish* Polity, both in Religion and State, till a final period was put to it under *Vespasian*, whose son *Titus*, a most just and excellent prince, out of a religious regard for the Temple, did his utmost to save it from the general ruin and devastation of that most unhappy State (*Josephus*, l. 7. *de Bell.* c. 9.) I say, this so lasting a continuance of the *Jewish* State, together with the favour and countenance of the princes and states above quoted, more especially considering that the laws and religion of the *Jews* were extremely opposite to, nay, even openly avow'd an abhorrence of all the heathen rites and ceremonies of religious worship; all this, I say, amounts to an irrefragable proof that the *Jews* were an antient people, that they were worthy of protection, and of an alliance and friendship with other States,

and that their laws and religion were truly such as the *Jews* pretended them to be, not founded by, nor under the care and inspection of meer man ; for if this had been their only support, how cou'd the extreme disformity of their religious ordinances to those of the Pagan worship have escap'd the power of so many and so different conquerors among the Heathens they have been forc'd to serve ? and consequently that the sacred books which we have, and which contain the whole System of their religion and laws, by which the order of the rites, ceremonies and sacrifices in their religious worship was directed, and the whole State govern'd ; I say, that these sacred books are true and genuine, and of an establish'd authority, as being perfectly conformable to all the antient monuments relating to the history of the *Jews*. But,

3. The divine Authority of the *Mosaic* writings (I may add, and of the other books of Scripture) is further strengthen'd by that univeral firm persuasion entertain'd by the *Jews*, that their laws (and the divine messages to them contain'd in the following Scriptures) were immediately dictated by the mouth of God, *i.e.* by the *Angel* that appear'd to *Moses* in the name of *Jehovah* ;  
which

which persuasion continu'd unchangeably the same from the first congregation of them, that stood and saw, as I may say, the divine presence on mount *Sinai*, to this very day: and indeed so deeply rooted is it in every individual *Jew*, that, in numberless instances we find it, they will rather part with life itself in the midst of exquisite torments, than renounce this belief and persuasion. An instance of steadiness not to be met with in any other religious profession (save the *Christian*) no sect of Philosophy, of what reputation soever, no establishment of heathen worship being able to produce hardly one instance (that I have met with) that wou'd expose his life to present tortures, and the instruments of death, purely to support the truth of his profession.

“ How many are there of our captive coun-  
trymen at this day (says *Josephus*) strug-  
gling with all manner of deaths, and la-  
bouring under exquisite torments, con-  
tending in the *Theatres* with beasts and  
more brutal men? And what's their  
crime? but that they will not renounce  
their country's laws, nor blaspheme the  
God of their forefathers. When did any  
of the *Greeks* stand such a tryal of their  
honour and courage? ” The *Romans* in-

deed were wont, on certain occasions, to whet their courage at the cry *pro aris & focis*, for their Altars (or, if you please, Religion) and their Household Gods; but *Household Gods* were always join'd to give the true edge to their valour, by which *Gods* was meant, the securing (and no doubt the increasing) their comfortable settlements. Now from whence cou'd arise this so amazing difference of behaviour of the Jews from that of all other Nations, but from a solidly well-grounded and unquestionable tradition, that their laws and ordinances were so many divine precepts, not to be renounc'd but at the peril of the divine judgments, which are infinitely more to be dreaded than any that weak man can inflict; and because moreover,

4. They had continually before their eyes standing monuments of the truth of those things that were written in the sacred writings, viz. the *Feast of the Passover*, instituted and observ'd with very remarkable and significant rites and ceremonies, to preserve in them a lively and an indeleble remembrance of the wonders God had wrought for them in *Egypt*, and in the land of *Canaan*; even their numberless burdensome laws concerning the rites and ceremoni-

nies relating to the *Temple-Sacrifices, Oblations, Purifications, First-fruits, Circumcision*, their *Abstinence from certain meats*, &c. their annual Journeys to Jerusalem three times every year : This so uncommon a load of burdensome obligations submitted to and comply'd with by one generation of men after another thro' such a lasting succession of Ages, appears to be an invincible argument, that their sanction and whole authority came immediately from God himself : how is it possible otherwise to conceive that such almost infinite collections of people for the space of above 1500 years, shou'd bow their necks to so almost insupportable a yoke of institutions and precepts without any murmuring, or at least any doubt or contradiction, or that any of them shou'd have at first submitted to them ?

5. The miraculous *Schechinah*, or luminous *Cloud*, which was a visible token of the divine *Presence* and most gracious protection which appear'd between the *Cherubims* in the most holy place, the sacredness of which place both in the *Tabernacle*, and after in the Temple (and which was so esteem'd even in the second Temple, tho' the *Schechinah* never appear'd in it) was such, that the *High-Priest* alone cou'd enter into it,

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and that but once in the year, with the most profound awfulness, and with the blood of sacrifice in his hand. The *Urim and Thummim*, by which the *High-Priest* consulted God before the *holy place*, and obtain'd oracular responses in behalf of the Nation and People, were visible demonstrations of the truth of their law as of divine institution, and fix'd in the *Jews* an immovable belief of it.

Let us now compare this *Law* and these *Ordinances*, deliver'd by *Moses*, with those instituted by *Lycurgus*, *Numa*, *Solon*, *Zoroastres*, the *Sects of Philosophers*, and *Mahomet*; which of these (I shall speak more particularly of *Zoroastres* and *Mahomet* a little lower) can boast even of a small share of 1000 years continuance, and of no alterations or additional improvements to them, or of any thing singular concerning them, except the boasted wisdom, and contrivance and disposition of the Lawgiver himself? whereas the *Mosaic Institutions* were ever, by the *Jews*, held so sacred and inviolable, that not a letter was suffer'd to be chang'd or diminish'd from them, and so they continue to this very day, allowing only some blunders of Transcribers and Printers. Can there possibly be imagin'd a stronger, a more pregnant argument of the truth of

the *Mosaic* Law and of the holy *Scriptures* being the immediate revelation of God, and continually under the divine protection?

6. and lastly, Let us now come more directly to the books of the holy *Scriptures* themselves: And 1st. The style and facts recorded in them, as far as can be conceiv'd, exactly agree with the times to which they are attributed. The most scrupulous Critick cannot pick out or point at the least flaw in either of those particulars, or discover any dissonancy between the Authors themselves or their writings. Can any thing like this be pretended of any other set or series of Writers?

2dly. It is well known that the knowledge of letters and of reading was exceeding rare before, and some time after the Captivity, and which was the particular science of the *Scribes*, and these but very few. It cannot therefore be wonder'd at, if at that time the copies of the books of *Moses* were extremely scarce, or that during the wicked Reigns of many *Israelitish* and *Jewish* kings, the books of *Moses* shou'd be neglected as to the reading or hearing of them; and this, notwithstanding it is very evident that even in that wicked Age the people well knew that their laws were written

<sup>2 Kings</sup><sup>22. 8.</sup><sup>2 Chron.</sup><sup>34.</sup><sup>Joseph.</sup><sup>Antiqu.</sup><sup>l. 10. c. 4.</sup>

ten in a book by Moses, from the fact of *Hilkiah* the High-Priest, who, in searching the Temple, and taking out the money for the workmen, &c. unexpectedly found the book of the law in the house of the Lord; for had they never heard of such a book, nor of the particulars deliver'd in it, the king and people cou'd not have so readily and unanimously receiv'd it, they cou'd not have been at once seiz'd with so universal a terror and dread of God's vengeance for the disobedience to the law which they heard from that book, as it appears they were. Hence it is very natural to conceive, that such a zeal, and such an awful sense and esteem of that sacred Book, must arise in the minds both of the king and people, as stirr'd up in them an immediate care to procure numbers of copies of it to be transcrib'd, that from thenceforwards it might become better known, and more familiar to all the people and their posterity. This remarkable event happen'd 852 years after the delivery of the law on mount *Sinai*, and before *Christ* 636, that is, 2366 years ago.

From these copies, and as many as cou'd be met with, *Ezra*, after the Jews return from their 70 years captivity, set forth a correct edition of the books of Moses, and of

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the Prophets (before his time) and other sacred books. See *Prideaux Connect. P. I.* B. 5. pag. 331. From this Epoch down to us the current of tradition in proof of the genuineness of the sacred Scriptures runs so clear, unsuspected and unquestionable, that I need not enlarge any further upon it. For soon after the Captivity, Synagogues in towns and cities were erected, much like our Parish-Churches, in which appointed portions were regularly read out of the law, interpreted and explain'd. See *Prideaux ibid. pag. 372.* Which is a demonstration of their being in use above 500 years before Christ. And as to the books of the Prophets, the chief of them were writ not long before the Captivity; so that, besides the copies of them in the hands of the Jews, their grandfathers, or great grandfathers, and perhaps even their fathers, were acquainted with the Prophets themselves, and with the subject of their predictions, so that this is an incontestable proof that those books cou'd not be forg'd.

The translation of the books of *Moses* into Greek in the time of *Ptolemy II. surnam'd Philadelphus*, for the use of the *Alexandrian Jews* (and Synagogue and Temple) who only understood *Greek*, above 200

years before *Christ*, and afterwards the translation of the Prophets after the persecution of *Antiochus Epiphanes* 160 years before *Christ*, is another substantial and undeniable proof of the authority of the sacred Scriptures. See *Prideaux*, P. 2. B. 1. p. 34. And I may add in the last place, that the genuineness of the books of Scriptures was never call'd in question (as if forg'd in latter times) by any enemy either of the *Jews* or *Christians*. *Porphyry* indeed, a philosopher and disputer against the *Christian* Religion about the middle of the third Century, objected against the book of *Daniel* as an *ex post facto* prophecy, or a prediction of things after they were done with an air of describing them in Hieroglyphick characters, as if written long before they happen'd: nevertheless he acknowledg'd the truth of the Historic facts; but the plainness of the prophecy, especially with relation to *Antiochus Epiphanes*, he will have to argue the Writer to have been more modern. But this is a strong confirmation of the authority of that sacred book, for it was always reckon'd among the holy Scriptures; for no time after the Captivity can be fix'd, when the others were receiv'd without it: and it is not at all likely, that so accurate and judicious a

writer as *Josephus* is, wou'd have plac'd that very remarkable passage in his history (never mistrusted as foisted into it) of *Jadua* the *High-Priest* meeting *Alexander* the <sup>Joseph.</sup> Great in a solemn procession of the *Jews*,<sup>Antiq.</sup> L 11. c. 8. and showing him out of *Daniel* the mighty success of his arms, foretold by that prophet of the *Jews*, by which he turn'd the fierceness of the conqueror's wrath against them into kindness, and a favourable reception of them, and obtain'd a continuance of the peaceable enjoyment of their laws and religious worship (a privilege not granted to the *Samaritans*) I say, *Josephus* wou'd not have ventur'd his reputation on so remarkable a passage, had he not had by him sufficient vouchers for it out of the *Grecian Memoirs and Writers*, designing his History for the reading of the *Greeks* themselves. And the fact there mention'd of *Alexander*'s favour to the *Jews*, which is certain from other Historians, seems to be an argument for the truth of the whole passage.

There have been also some more modern *Jews*, who have betray'd a less regard for the book of *Daniel*, than the other sacred volumes; but one may easily see thro' this objection: these men are displeas'd that this holy Prophet, by divine inspiration, has

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more particularly calculated and cast up the time when the expected *Messiah* was to appear; and this being long ago fulfill'd, utterly defeats all their present affected expectations of him. And this also may be reckon'd a confirmation of the genuineness of the book of *Daniel*. From all this I will venture to conclude, that such a continu'd texture and perfect harmony of proofs amounts to little less than a demonstration of the *Mosaic* laws and ordinances being of divine revelation, and of the undoubted authority and genuineness of the holy Scriptures. Neither can I conceive that any other exception can be made against this accumulated argument than this, that it seems to be principally founded on the records and tradition of the *Jews*, and therefore wholly a partial one, and by so much of less authority and force. For it is observable, that most Nations are fond of a far-fetch'd antiquity of their original, and of an affected presumption, that their laws and worship are of something more than human institution. Thus *Numa*, *Zoroastres*, and *Mahomet* endeavour'd to impose on the *Romans*, the *Perians*, and the *Musselmans*, that the System of constitutions they drew up, was dictated by some superior *Genius*, or receiv'd by some divine communication.

Anf.

*Answer.* It is in great measure true, that the account we have of the *Mosaic* laws and customs is chiefly taken from the holy Scriptures handed down to us by the *Jews*; or by a continu'd tradition carry'd on by a succession of Ages and of the *Rabbinical* writings. But is a rational, well-grounded and uninterrupted tradition founded upon national records to be disputed or call'd in question, unless where they favor of romance, fable, or put a strain upon reason? And I am positive, that nothing of this can be alledg'd to weaken the efficacy of those proofs I have offer'd above, in behalf of the Antiquity of the *Mosaic* Laws, and that they were of divine Revelation; and that the Books wherein they are written are genuin. Neither is the argument wholly built on *Jewish* records, I have quoted some others both out of the *Perfian*, *Grecian* and *Roman* Archives. But in the supposition, that we had no other allegations to produce, but purely from the *Jews* themselves, this can be no just exception against their force and credibility. For it was hardly possible, that the *Jewish* affairs, more especially their laws and customs re-

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lating to religion, should easily come to the knowledge of other Nations. For the *Jews* treated all other people with great contempt, as persons unclean and not worthy for them to converse with any further than was purely necessary for traffick, which they manag'd with extraordinary caution. Moreover, the great abhorrence of the Heathen worship they openly express'd, and an utter disregard to all polite literature, at least till later Ages, might be a reason that the other Nations had little curiosity to enquire into the *Jewish* affairs or manners. And the contempt of other Nations entertain'd by the *Jews*, created in those a reciprocal return of hatred of these. However

<sup>2<sup>dly</sup></sup>

, The *Jews* were not entirely unknown to their neighbouring Nations, as *Josephus* in his first Book against *Apion* has sufficiently demonstrated from the *Aegyptian*, *Chaldean*, *Phænician* and *Grecian* Writers, as from *Manetho* (the *Aegyptian*) *Berosus* \* (the *Chaldean* tho' he writ in *Greek*) from the *Tyrian Records* (which were of great antiquity) from *Dius* (a

\* These two Historians lived above two hundred years before Christ.

*Phœnician Historian) Menander* (the Ephesian who made a collection of historical memoirs both of *Greeks* and *Barbarians*) he said *Pythagoras*\* was well vers'd in the Jewish laws, and in many cases an exact observer of them, as he also shews from *Hermippus* a *Pythagorean*, who was an exact and careful historian. From *Clearchus* a disciple of *Aristotle*, who gives the Jews a great character in the person of one of them: Lastly, *Hæcatœus* the *Abderite* (who lived three hundred years before Christ) speaks very strongly in testimony of the Jews uncommon veneration for their Laws and constancy to them; *Josephus* in the book now cited, has extracted from the foremention'd Authors very plain and strong Passages in behalf of the antiquity and honour of the Jewish Nation; and of their inviolable adherence to their laws and religion.

As to the holy Scriptures, especially the *Pentateuch*, there was a comment on the books of *Moses*, said to be writ by one *Aristobulus* an *Alexandrian Jew* and *Peripatetick Philosopher* in the time of *Pto-*

\* See *Prideaux's Connexion*, Part I. Book 4. compare p. 212, 220, &c.

*lemy Philometor* \*, in which comment the Author asserts, that the books of *Moses* had been in great part translated into Greek even before the time of *Alexander the Great*, and that *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, and other *Grecians* had been beholden to those books for the chief part of their Philosophy. See *Clemens Alexand.* l. 1. *Strom.* pag. 342. In which place *Clemens* quotes *Numenius* a *Pythagorean Philosopher*, saying, *what is Plato, but Moses speaking in the Attic tongue*, Μωσῆς ἀττικῶν; 'Tis true, Dean *Prideaux* † suggests very probable arguments against the so great antiquity of the comment of *Aristobulus*; but as *Clemens*, who liv'd in the second Century, quotes and receives that book as ancient, it must be (no doubt) of antiquity before his time. As to some parts of the books of *Moses* being translated into Greek, as mention'd in *Aristobulus*'s comment, it seems very probable, at least before the *Alexandrian* translation into Greek; for, both many fables of the Poets, and some excellent moral precepts of the Philosophers, are generally supposed to be found-

\* One hundred and seventy eight years before Christ.  
† Connexion Part II. Book 1. p. 38.

ed on some knowledge of the Scripture, which some of the more inquisitive Greeks had attain'd; which may very probably presuppose some extracts to have been taken out of the holy Scriptures turned into Greek, by those that made use of them. I mention this, because my only purpose in this place, is to shew and prove the great antiquity of the holy Scriptures.

*Manetho* the above mentioned *Aegyptian* Historian (according to *Josephus* l. 1. contr. *Apion*) undertaking to write the history of *Aegypt*, professes that he would faithfully extract it (as far as the *Jews* are concerned) out of the holy Scriptures; which is a plain argument of their great antiquity. The version of the LXX. Interpreters, however apocryphal the history of it under *Aristeas*'s name may be, is another evident note of the antiquity of the Pentateuch, as being quoted and received by *Philo*, *Josephus* and others as done in the time of *Ptolemy Philadelphus* above two hundred years before Christ. It cannot reasonably be expected, that we should alledge authors mentioning the holy Scriptures up to their first original, which

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would be to offer at finding a tract thro' an impassable gulph of fabulous ages and writers unacquainted with the *Jewish* affairs; and yet perhaps we may not unreasonably conjecture, that had the several libraries consum'd by many unhappy wars, escaped such irreparable devastations, even this attempt of carrying on a chain of testimonies up to the delivery of the Law by *Moses*, might not have been impracticable. However, notwithstanding this unhappiness of time, it is sufficient, that we meet with a mention of the holy Scriptures, and of the *Jews* as high as fair and rational history can lead us; that we have a succession of sacred books from *Moses* almost to the Messias, at least an evident tradition of a distinct People (the *Jews*) that has preserv'd those books with the utmost hazard of their lives; that every Generation of that People, however deficient as to practice with relation to the precepts contain'd in those books, always held them to be of divine institution, and comply'd at least with some of those precepts, as such, particularly those concerning the *Temple* and *Sacrifices*, the *Sabbath*, *Meats*, &c. and lastly, that the

said books perfectly accord one with another, manifesting the same spirit of wisdom, goodness and truth, and undoubtedly agreeing with those extra-scriptural historians of what nation soever, that are of the best credit and character with regard to those times and facts treated of by them both. I need not trouble the reader with conducting him through an open channel of tradition, concerning the genuineness and authority of the Bible after the birth of our Blessed Saviour to this very day: for undoubted history demonstrates, that from the first Century, that sacred Book was read in their Assemblies, that at various times great numbers of Christians have died in defence of it, and that infinite numbers of men of the most consummate learning, wisdom and probity, have with great veneration cited almost every verse of the whole Bible in their writings extant at this time.

I come now to the particular instances of *Numa* and *Zoroastres*; history tells us, that they did affect to have it believed, that their constitutions were the dictates of some superior genius or divine power. And it is not certain, but in this they

might mimic the real thing, *viz.* the divine favour that was vouchsafed to *Moses* and the *Israelites*. And this may be also offered as an argument that *Numa*, a very studious and learned Philosopher, might have met with some account of *Moses*, especially if we reflect on that fundamental principle of his to the *Romans* so contrary to the Heathen *Theology*, that *God was not to be represented by the figure of man or beast*, which is almost word for word a precept of *Moses* to the *Jews*. I say, this may be offer'd as an argument, that *Numa* had met with some account of *Moses*: for as false miracles \* are a strong evidence that there were or have been true ones, and false Oracles that there have been real ones (otherwise how should such things at first have enter'd into mens minds to amuse and abuse the credulity of men?) so why may we not suppose, that the revelation of *God* made to *Moses*, and upon that account fastening a strong influence on the *Jews* concerning an inviolable esteem for his Laws, might induce *Numa* (and others) to affect a like re-

*See Deut.  
iv. 15-19.*

\* So counterfeit Coins, Persons, &c. are undeniable proofs that such Coins, Persons, &c. are or have been. revelation

velation imparted to him in order to gain a greater credit to his institutions? But be that as it will, it does not at all appear that the *Romans* ever entertain'd that opinion of *Numa* or his laws, or that they long continu'd without considerable alterations or additions (as plainly is to be seen in the first volume of the *Roman History* lately publish'd) or that any other regard was had to those laws, but as useful to the *Roman State*.

As to *Zoroastres*, the very learned Dean *Prideaux* \* has strongly prov'd, that he was either a *Jew*, or perfectly instructed in the Law of *Moses*: and therefore as he assum'd the air of a *Lawgiver*, no wonder he should affect to become like to *Moses*. It is true, the *Magians* always retain'd a great esteem and veneration for him, not only as their *Lawgiver* (tho' in reality he was no more than the reviver † of their decaying sect) but as a Person inspired: and to procure himself this regard from them, he affected to withdraw himself from the society of men, and to retire into a cave for the sake of a more

\* Connexion, Part I. B. 4. p. 211, &c.

† *Prideaux*, Ibid.

immediate conversation with God: and by this pretext, and his very extraordinary knowledge in Philosophy and Astronomy at that time, he successfully establish'd his imposture. But, as Dean *Prideaux* plainly shews, his laws are collected from the laws and customs of the *Jews*: and he never pretended to any divine testimony in behalf of them, either of prophecy or signs and wonders. So that this whole veneration entertain'd for him at first, and at this time by the small remains of his sect, the *Gours* \* in *Persia*, is founded purely on his great knowledge and learning; and it is no wonder that idiots should easily be impos'd upon in such a manner, or that they should still continue to be so impos'd on by his successors the Priests to this day, all learning being entirely confin'd to them, and with-held from the People; in which the Priests find their account, and reap therefrom no small advantage.

As *Mahomet's* history is so well known, it will be sufficient to observe, that gain and empire were his chief views; and that his imposture was at first establish'd, and

\* A most idiot and illiterate sect of men.

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has hitherto been supported and propagated purely by the dint and edge of the sword, and in a great measure through an establish'd ignorance of his followers; who are no where to be met with, but in states subject to the Mahometan yoke; and consequently it is no wonder we have no histories of their martyrs and sufferings purely for religion sake. Whereas the Jewish and Christian Religion is confin'd to no climate, numberless Congregations of them living in all states and under all kinds of governments, and often suffering great outrages and persecutions for it. Lastly, *Mahomet's* imposture never laid claim to any divine character, as Miracles, Prophecy, &c. in confirmation of its pretended truth. The *Musselmans* have nothing more than *Mahomet's* own word, that the *Alcoran* was reveal'd to him by the Angel *Gabriel*; whereas both the Jewish and Christian Religion have the authority of all kinds of divine testimonies, as numberless miracles and prodigies wrought in the presence of vast throngs of people, and in so open a manner, and void of all human power, cunning or skill; that it was impossible the world could be imposed upon. It

It only now remains, that I connect the argument of this chapter with the foregoing ones. In the second chapter, I demonstrated this proposition, *there is but one necessary self-existent Being*; That *every part of the universe, even the smallest atom is the effect of his will and power*. In the third chapter it is unexceptionably prov'd, that *the creation of the world as describ'd by Moses is consonant to reason, and is confirm'd by these evident characters of truth, Chronology, Chorography, and Peopling the Earth*. In this fourth chapter, I have made good these two propositions, 1<sup>st</sup>, 'Tis possible for God to reveal to man a more perfect knowledge of himself, of his will, &c. than man by the force of his own mind is able to attain. 2<sup>dly</sup>, That the revelation made to man as contain'd in the Books of Moses, is true, and worthy of our belief of it for these reasons: 1<sup>st</sup>, The manner and stile wherewith it is deliver'd, is altogether becoming and worthy of God. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It greatly tends to the good of mankind. 3<sup>dly</sup>, It is confirm'd by evident testimonies of divine power and approbation, as Miracles and Prophecy. 4<sup>thly</sup>, It was never judiciously call'd in question. 5<sup>thly</sup>, That the Jews

were a very ancient and religious People, as is proved incontestably. 6<sup>thly</sup>, Through them we have an uninterrupted tradition of that revelation, from the time it was first deliver'd. 7<sup>thly</sup>, The immovable steadiness of the Jews to the belief of their Laws as reveal'd. 8<sup>thly</sup>, To cause this their steadiness they had standing monuments of the truth of their reveal'd Law, as the feast of the Passover, Sabbath, &c. 9<sup>thly</sup>, Their burdensome obligations prescrib'd by the Law, could not have been submitted to, but as evidently imposed by divine authority, and enforc'd by divine menaces. 10<sup>thly</sup>, The Books of the Scriptures, wherein the divine Revelation is contain'd, are genuine, and this first appears from their simpleness of stile: Secondly, their antiquity, and by an uninterrupted tradition of them, which from Ezra's time, is demonstrated by portions out of them being read in synagogues, as we learn from Rabbinical writers; and by those books being mention'd from time to time by other Authors, and by their translation into Greek. Having thus establish'd the truth of a divine Revelation, and the authority of the sacred Scriptures, the next point I propos'd to consider is in

## C H A P. V.

*The abruptness and obscurity of stile observable in the holy Scriptures, is no objection against their credibility: and that in particular, they professedly make use of types to pre-signify things to come, and that this method of prediction has its proper use and effect.*

**O**RIGEN against *Celsus* \* observes, that the inspir'd writers of the Scriptures, being professedly writers of the truth, so worded their discourses, that they might be profitable to, and draw all men to the truth; not only the Greeks and more harmless Barbarians, but even the most ignorant and wild inhabitants of the remoter deserts. That *Celsus* indeed, and the learned among the Greeks openly expressed their contempt of the plainness and simplicity of the Scripture diction; but replies *Origen, the Prophets, and Jesus and his Apo-*

\* Contr. Cels. l. 6. init. p. 275.

stles

thes were chiefly intent on delivering all necessary and saving truths, and in such a form of words as might benefit all men. That *Plato* with all his ornament and nicety of composition could be *profitable* (*εἰ γέ ἀνητέρ, if he was at all profitable*) but to very few, his works being found only in the hands of the learned: but that simplicity or plainness of expression was in the nature of the thing beneficial *to incomparably more*, even to the illiterate also: And c. 7. p. 338. he further observes, that *Celsus* full of envy, that he was not able to apprehend the sense and design of the prophetick writings, gave way to bitter invectives against them, representing them as stuffed with *obscure, unintelligible, and enthusiastick sentences*, which gave a handle to *knaves and impostors* to turn them to what use they pleas'd. Where by the way, we may take notice to whom our modern calumniators of the Christian revelation are beholden, for the pretended difficulties they affect to labour under with relation to the Scriptures.

But *Origen* justly prevents all such vain and ill-grounded prejudices, by giving the true reason, why on some occasions the Prophets

Ibid.

Prophets made use of obscure and figurative speeches, as *Parables*, *Ænigma's*, *mysterious allusions*, *allegories* and *proverbs*: for, says he, whatever was necessary for the People to know either for the amendment of their lives, or their instruction in all moral duties, was propos'd to them in very plain words, as God commanded it should be. But what was necessary at present to be bidden from the people (and to serve rather for after times, as prophecies of future things, &c.) or was design'd to raise in some men an attention, and a desire to search diligently into truths, not indeed absolutely necessary to be known, but which greatly contribute to our improvement in spiritual knowledge, this was designedly wrapt up in figures, parables and dark sentences. And indisputably such a method of writing is altogether worthy of the particular inspiration of a God of truth, wisdom, goodness and holiness, which delivers those articles of knowledge necessary, or greatly profitable to all men for their more sure direction towards a true and acceptable service and worship of God, in easy and plain terms, whereby the most ignorant and illiterate may receive

receive all due information and instruction; and yet which method of writing folds up many other important truths, calculated to raise in men's minds a more exalted notion of the supreme *Being*, and of virtue, in more lofty and figurative strains to serve for the more serious employment and study of those who have leisure, knowledge and experience by application to cultivate and improve the more spiritual faculties of the soul; and again, which with regard to future or prophetick events, so casts a veil over those future truths, which are more especially to serve as arguments to future generations of the divine prescience, and of the completion of the divine predictions in their proper season, and at the time when first deliver'd to provoke the attention, and the expectation of that generation to whom they were first propos'd, and their dependence on the divine disposition of happy events to themselves, and to those that follow after.

Here then we may see at once the true reason of the abruptness and obscurity of the Scripture stile, which does not in any wise derogate from the dignity and proper

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usefulness of composition, but rather highly contributes to it. As to the particular instance of *hieroglyphicks, figures, parables and proverbs*, this is not to be laid as a singular charge to the *Hebrews*: they that are conversant in the Eastern Authors inform us, that this method universally prevail'd among them. The *Ægyptian Priests* were remarkable for their hieroglyphic manner of communicating their sentiments, a very abstruse one, and not to be comprehended even with hard labour: *Pythagoras* \* and some other Philosophers affected to deliver their instructions to their scholars in very dark proverbial sayings: So that in a just comparison with these, the sacred Scriptures are so far from being to be objected against, on account of their abruptness and obscurity of diction, that they deserve our highest esteem, inasmuch as all their instructions and precepts of life and discipline, are express'd in the most easy and intelligible words.

As to the use of figures, parables and similitudes in composition or speech, it is

\* See Hierocles interpret. Symb. Pythag.

common to the best and politeſt writers, and they ſerve partly for the ornament of ſtyle, the entertainment of the Hearers & Readers ; and moreover to enliven an attention to them. For in all diſcourses, where every thing is eaſily and plainly expreſſ'd for the fake of the meanest ca-pacities (as it ought to be in points neceſſarily to be underſtood by all) men of a more refin'd taste are apt to deſpise and receive them with great ſupinenefs and in-difference : but the interſpersing in pro-per places certain flowers of composition, as figures, alluſions to hiſtoric paſſages, or beauteous ſayings of popular Authors, parables, ſimilitudes, &c. this awakens the attention, and excites a curioſity to apprehend the author's deſign of them, to judge of their aptneſs to the ſubject pro-poſ'd, and of the beauty of their appli-cation. Thus it is very obviouſ to ſee, that not the *Hebreus* and the Easterns only, but the Authors of the highest cha-racters make uſe of this method of writing, with this diſference indeed, that the *Jews* as well as other Eastern people, were more accuſtomed to this ſort of ſpeaking and writing.

But there is a more especial cause to be alledg'd, for the abruptness and obscurity of stile in many cases of the inspir'd writers. For besides what has now been observ'd, and that the method of the Eastern compositions, is not a close connected texture of propositions and periods, but rather a loose, broken and scatter'd way of casting in the matters they are to treat of ; I say, besides all this, the holy Scriptures abound with variety of prophetick discourses, some relating to a long extent of time to come, others to a more early completion. Now it is evident, that such prophecies could not (ought not) to be express'd in very plain and perfectly intelligible terms. For as the Creator of the world governs it with wisdom, and where the free-will of man is concern'd, with great condescension, had the holy Spirit reveal'd to the prophets future events so distinctly, as that they might have express'd minutely every thing, *time, circumstance and person* in proper terms ; their prophecies cou'd not have been (generally at least) fulfill'd without some strain being put upon the free-will of man, and without some mi-  
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racle to bring it about. Because in the said prophecies, the interest and principal concern of men in power, of States and Empires, the devastations and ruin of one, and the exalting of another, are generally interwoven and connected with the divine purposes relating to God's religious or spiritual government of the world. Now how easy is it for Statesmen, that generally stick at nothing to secure and promote their own interest, when they are long forewarn'd of a danger that threatens them, and are perfectly inform'd of every circumstance of it, how easy is it, I say, for such men by early care and precaution to avert such dangers, and quash all attempts even in their very birth; or rather to prevent any attempts from being form'd? I am perswaded, had the holy Scriptures contain'd such a plain description of all future dispositions of the world, in lieu of delivering them in obscure and hieroglyphical characters, the holy Bible would have held the first place in all Imperial Cabinets, and wou'd have obtain'd from politicians more esteem, than even now it is disregarded by them.

## Arguments in Proof of

When the prophet *Elisha* told *Hazael* what cruelties he was to exercise on the *Israelites*, and that he would be king over *Syria* by cutting off his master *Benhadad*, had this also been communicated to *Benhadad* and his other ministers of state, how easily might this prediction have been defeated? Had the prophet *Daniel* in describing the fierce and bloody persecution of the wicked *Jews* by *Antiochus Epiphanes*, made mention of the tyrant's name, the time distinctly mark'd, and the place of his residence and empire, the *Jews* by timely care, and by the help of neighbouring States might happily have prevented so great an evil. Thus if we run through the whole of the prophecies of the Scriptures, we shall easily confess, that there was a necessity for them to be couch'd under dark and figurative terms, on purpose to give the readers or hearers to understand, that certain evils were to happen in punishment of sin and wickedness, and that God wou'd always preserve a fatherly care over his Church, for the good and happiness of the truly religious, still leaving men to follow their own schemes and devices, which, however

ever opposite to justice and the practice of virtue, wou'd always tend finally to the glory of God, and the benefit of all righteous men: and moreover, those prophecies were so couch'd under dark and figurative terms, that when the time of their fulfilling came, every one might discern it, and acknowledge the prescience of God distinctly foreknowing all future events, and his vigilance and care over the *Faithful*, bringing secretly about his divine purposes for their good and happiness. Even St. Paul upon this account, seems to plead in behalf of the *Jews* for their blasphemous outrages against our Blessed Lord, for says he, *had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* Thus if we rationally and without prejudice consider the design and method of writing of the inspir'd Penmen as appropriated to their proper subjects, it must evidently appear inexcusable, unjust, even ignorance in any one to object to the holy Scriptures the charge of abruptness and obscurity of stile, or to offer this as a pretext against a credibility of them: on the contrary, there appears through the whole of them an evident majesty of stile, an inimitable,

1 Cor. ii. 8.

but very awful simplicity, a never to be enough admir'd tendency to truth, holiness, and to fill our souls with a profound reverential idea of God: (The most admir'd of the *Greek* and *Roman* writings, whether of philosophy or oratory, are but so many empty flashes in comparison of the solidity and depth of the Scripture doctrines:) and consequently, we cannot but acknowledge these as evident characters of the finger of God, highly worthy of our continual study and meditation, and firmest adhesion to the belief of the doctrines, precepts and truths deliver'd in them.

It must indeed be confess'd, that there are some few history narrations (and but very few) in the books of *Moses*, which are not easily reconcileable to our present reading and apprehension of them: such are the *Serpent's* conversation with *Eve*, the history of *Balaam*, of *Sampson* and one or two others in the book of *Judges*. But as I do not pretend at present to engage myself in a comment and explication of the difficult texts and passages of the holy Scriptures, I shall content myself with observing, that as it wou'd

wou'd be a very rash and precipitous judgment to condemn and reject the authority of any writer, purely because we meet with some very few places, of which we are at a loss to come at the author's meaning, though through his whole work of a considerable bulk, the author challenges and commands our highest esteem, so doubtless is any one guilty of great rashness and partiality, who on pretence of the above cited instances, affects to entertain doubts concerning the authority and credibility of the Scriptures in general; which every where else are worthy of our strongest faith and veneration. And even to give way to an adversary's scruples, the most that can be made of the above cited passages amounts to no more than this, that *Moses* and the author of the book of *Judges*, have not clearly enough with proportion to our present apprehension express'd or describ'd those narrations, so that we at this distance of time, when the method of writing has run through various changes, and when the use of certain words and phrases peculiar to some ages or times (and only then to be understood) is wore out and grown obsolete,

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are not able hardly to aim at the Author's meaning. So much however, seems to be undoubted, that the true purport of those passages, is not that which the naked words themselves first suggest. But I shall not dwell any longer upon a subject that lies without the line of my present undertaking. I proceed therefore, to the other head of this chapter.

And I need not observe, that nothing is more common in study'd discourses, than the use of *Tropes*, *Allusions*, *Similitudes*, &c. which are design'd not for embellishment only, but for the greater instruction of the Readers. I shall only mention these three kinds which we meet with in the sacred volumes, and these are *Allegory*, *Parable* and *Type*: and they are differently defin'd or describ'd by different Authors; I shall give the shortest and plainest notion of them according to my apprehension. An *Allegory* is a discourse or history of one Author apply'd by another, to another purpose or subject than was intended by the Author himself; but so, that this other subject has some resemblance to the subject of the Author himself. So the Apostle, *Gal.* iv. 22. makes use of *Moses's* account

account concerning *Sarah* and *Agar* and their sons, to represent the Christian and Jewish covenants, and tells us, that he apply'd that passage of *Genesis* in an allegorical sense. A *Parable* is an historic fact or narrative, either real or only contriv'd to suggest some important lesson of instruction, in order to imprint a stronger notice in the minds of the hearers, which lesson has an easy and immediate similitude to the narrative as literally express'd. Such was the parable of *Nathan* spoken <sup>2 Sam. xii.</sup> to *David* of the *Ewe Lamb*, to imprint in his heart a true sense of his sin of Adultery with the wife of *Uriah*; and such are the many divinely excellent parables of our Blessed Saviour in the Gospels. A *Type* as distinguish'd from a *Parable* (for in many things they agree, and may be taken one for the other) in the Scripture use, consists rather in action or an outward representation of something like unto it, that is to be done hereafter. And in this figure, the *Actor* is the *Type*, and the person represented the *Anti-type*, and the actions of the *Type* are stiled *typical*, or representative of things or actions to be done by the *Anti-type*. The term *Type* from

from the Greek word signifies a *character*, *impression* or *likeness* of something else. Thus *Agabus* Acts xxi. 11. typically pre-signify'd St. Paul's being to be bound at *Jerusalem*. Thus *Ezek.* xii. 3—12. before express'd the flight of *Zedekiah* out of *Jerusalem* by night (compare 2 Kings xxv. *Jerem.* lii. 7.) and his being taken and bound by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and his eyes put out. See more instances of this figure, *Isa.* xx. *Jeremiah* chapters xiii. vi. xviii. xix. *Ezek.* iv. and many others in sundry places of the Bible: where it is often expressly mention'd, that such figures are for *Signs* or *Types* of future things.

After these quotations, it will be unnecessary to detain the reader, and spend his time in proving, that the sacred writers frequently on purpose make use of types to shadow out (as it may be term'd) or prefigure by certain actions, and foretel future facts. It may be proper, however to observe, that such kinds of prophetick signs are more emphatical and more apposite to attract the attention, and affect the minds of men, than mere flying words, and to leave in them a stronger impression

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of the facts thereby represented. But I wou'd not omit to advertise the reader, by the way, of a very judicious reflexion of Maimonides \*, concerning the holy prophets manner of performing their typical actions. We must not, says he, apprehend that those holy servants of God did really do what they mention of themselves to have done by the commandment of God as *Ifaias walking naked C. xx.* three years; *Jeremiah's making a journey C. xiii.* of many days to carry a linen girdle and bide it in a hole of the rock in the river Euphrates; *Ezekiel's taking his stuff, and C. xii.* digging a hole through the wall of the city to carry it out thereby (to represent Zedekiah's flight) and many such like actions; we must not, says Maimonides, suppose these to be real actions: if so, this wou'd have argu'd the prophets of the true God to be in very deed like to the priests, the engines of the Heathen Oracles and impostures, who on a sudden being seiz'd with a kind of phrenzy, or over swelling with an inward rage or fire burst into distorted motions, and other tokens

\* L. Moreh Nevochim, Par. 2. c. 46. pag. 322. Lat.  
Transl.

of a distracted mind, altogether misbegotten and unworthy not only of divine inspiration, but of a rational composure and frame of mind ; fit rather to excite in the beholders a commiseration and contempt of the patient himself, or a servile dread of the hidden cause. This therefore was not the case of the holy prophets above related : of whom it is more reasonable to conceive that such actions by divine impulse were represented to them in a dream or trance, which left in their minds a lively idea of them, and occasion'd their publishing them to the people with more force and energy. I confess, were many texts of this nature in the prophetic writings to be taken literally as they lie, it wou'd not be so easy to discern a perfect difference betwixt the raging enthusiasm of the oracular priests at *Delphi*, &c. and the prophets of the true God; or how that of the Apostle can be true, in *Cor. xiv. 32.* *the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*, i. e. they are not hurry'd on by a mad enthusiasm, but always are left in a composure of mind to comport themselves and speak to the people, as the ministers of a rational

tional and wise God. But to this it may be

*Objected,* 1<sup>st</sup>, How do such bare representations in words, work on the minds of the hearers a deeper impression than a parable or story? 2<sup>dly</sup>, If it is so unworthy of the true prophets to personate such things, why is it less unworthy to have them represented in a dream or trance, and to communicate them to the people?

*Answer.* To the 1<sup>st</sup>, I have already observ'd, that *Parables* and *Types* are promiscuously taken for one another. But as the difference between them consists in this, that *Types* are prophetick actions or signs, so the difference is here preserv'd, though the actions are no more than representations in a dream or trance. For the prophets seem'd to have perform'd those actions in their inspir'd dream or trance, and no doubt, the people understood the prophet's discourse in no other sense, not seeing him actually do those things; and his neighbours especially knowing that *Isaiah*, for instance, did not walk naked three years, and so of others in proportion. However, that visionary performance gave a strong impression to the

the prophet's mind, and as being a representation form'd by the power of the divine Spirit, this also contributed greatly to make the *Type* sink deeper into the minds of the people, than a bare narrative could do. To the

2<sup>d</sup>, There is a wide difference betwixt such actions being represented in a dream, and when really done. For in a dream or vision, there is really no action at all; and by this means, what principally affects the beholders is avoided, namely strange exotic gestures, which are very unbecoming in public view. And reason in such cases of a dream being suspended, men do not expect so regular a chain of rational actions, as when the mind is thoroughly awake, and enjoys the entire use of its faculties. 'Tis true, the *Spirit of God* neither *slumbereth nor sleepeth*, but notwithstanding to cause such visionary representations, in order to strike the prophets and people with a thorough sense of future truths for their spiritual good, I say, to cause such representations for the sake of both prophets and people, accustom'd to such kind of figurative descriptions even in their common dealings,

is neither an irrational method of prophecy or proposing truths to such a people for their spiritual and temporal benefit, nor unworthy of God. For the important event to be represented by those visionary actions was the chief thing intended by the divine Spirit: and the similar actions only represented in the dream or vision, is an apposite emblem to give a strong impression on the mind; and this also was intended. So that such a kind of visionary types has all the advantage of real ones, and falls under no imputation that might be objected against them when actually put in practise; and is a proper method to be made use of by the holy Spirit of God to a people accustom'd to, or capable and apt to be influenc'd by them.

Having thus plainly demonstrated, that the sacred writers frequently make use of *types* to presignify future things, and that they are perfectly adapted to such a design, tho' I am fully persuaded, that thro' the whole context of the holy Scriptures, there are many passages and facts which were intended by the divine disposition as prophetick signs or *types* of Christ and the New Testament; for instance, the

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*Paschal*

Exod. xii. *Paschal Lamb*, and the *Passover* observ'd as a memorial of the deliverance of the *Israelites* from the *Ægyptian* bondage, a manifest type of the suffering of Christ,

Mat. xxvi.  
26.  
Mark  
Luke

and of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper instituted for a solemn memorial of man's redemption from the insolvable debt of sin, and from the power of the Devil: the tabernacle with the *Holy* of *Holies* not to be enter'd into, an evident type of heaven being shut up to man; and the High Priest's entrance into it once every year <sup>10.</sup> with the blood of others, a plain figure of Christ's once entrance into heaven with his own blood, to open that blessed gate of everlasting life, by appearing in the presence of God for us, as our great High Priest: the sacrifices of the *Mosaic* Law were also intended types of that one full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the atonement for the sins of the whole world, with numberless others unnecessary to be mention'd here: I say, tho' I am fully persuaded of the truth of these particulars, notwithstanding I cannot think them proper arguments to be made use of at this time, or against Heathens in proof of the Christian Religion. I shou'd rather think

think that such kind of typical applications are a consequence resulting from the truth of Christianity, being already establish'd upon more unexceptionable proofs. For from thence a natural claim arises of judging, that since the Christian covenant was originally intended, and all along spoken of and foretold by the inspir'd servants of God, and that God is the Author both of the old and new Law, it is, I say, natural to conceive that the *Former Law* should have some reference or prospect to the *Latter*; and that many things might be done under the Former covenant on purpose to point to future things appointed to be done under the Latter. And thus much may suffice to have observ'd on the nature of types, which I have done rather to shew the nature and use of them as we find them in the sacred volumes, than to rely on them as absolute and peremptory arguments in defence of the Christian Religion.

Having in the foregoing chapter establish'd upon an unshaken foundation the authority of the holy Scriptures, and that they contain a revelation of God to men, I come nearer to my principal design;

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and the better to prepare the reader for it, I shall set apart the following chapter, to lay before him under one summary view, a context or series of the divine disposition of things towards that blessed and most accomplish'd work of God in behalf of man; *the redemption of the world by his Son Jesus Christ.*



## C H A P. VI.

The holy Scriptures represent a continu'd disposition of God, carry'd on through the whole of them, concerning the appearance of some extraordinary person for the general good of mankind.

THIS is a point so evident, that to make a doubt of it, betrays a superficial or rather no knowledge at all of the holy Scriptures. Indeed it shou'd not seem strange to any one that entertains a just notion of God, that a *Being of infinite wisdom and goodness* should form a regular and consistent disposition of things, for the benefit and happiness of his creatures, form'd according to *his likeness*, whom he treats as his favourite children. On the other hand it is no wonder, that those who are doubtful of a *divine Providence*, and perhaps secretly in their hearts, even of the *Being of God*, should not only reject such a divine œconomy in behalf of

men, and the holy Scriptures themselves, but even the possibility of a divine Revelation: but it is somewhat surprizing, that men of abilities and study, who acknowledge a divine Providence, and a just retribution to be adjudg'd to all men according to their works, shou'd stumble at a beneficent scheme of divine Providence so wisely and rationally presented before them, wherein the benignity of God so abundantly appears towards all men to render them infinitely happy. And after all, what is this stumbling-block, that they will not pass over, or rather, that they themselves have fix'd? In truth only this: man being left to himself, and to the great dishonour and provocation of his Creator, having made a most wicked use of his reason and his other gifts of nature, in entertaining most vile and unworthy notions of God, and setting up his creatures in opposition to, or as Gods equal to him; in suffering himself to be led away into gross and most absurd impieties, and in giving himself over to wallow continually in beastly lusts, God out of his tender compassion to his perishing children, lost in the dark mazes of fleshly defilements

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and irrecoverable ignorance of God and of their duty, purposes and contrives a most gracious method of bringing them back to himself, and of placing them in a plain and certain path to everlasting felicity, by making himself known to them in a stupendous manner, and revealing his divine Will, that is, informing them what it is he requires of them to do, and what he will do for them if they approve themselves dutiful children ; if otherwise, what punishments he has ordain'd to those that disobey him. This, it seems, is the mighty *rock of offence* to our modern unbelievers and cavillers against divine Relation ; but which is very unworthy of that boasted character they affect to be distinguish'd by, viz. of men singular for their great penetration and use of the principles of reason and morality.

But let us now pass from these general reflexions, to examine the fact as advanc'd in the title of this chapter. And soon after the first creation, we have an imperfect (according to our apprehension) and confus'd prediction of this truth, Gen. iii. 14, 15. *And God said — I will put enmity between thee (the serpent, the figure*

of Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed (thy evil ministers) and her seed: and it shall bruise thy head (the son of the wo-

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 8. man shall destroy the works of the Devil) and thou shalt bruise his heel (thou shalt

be permitted to offer some violence to him, but not to have the least degree of prevalence against him.) And c. xii. 1—3.

See Gen. Ch. xviii. 13. and xxiii. 18. And the Lord said unto Abram—in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

And c. xxvi. 2—4. And the Lord appeared unto him (Isaac) and said in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. C.

xxviii. 13, 14. And—the Lord said (to Jacob) I am the the Lord God of Abraham thy Father, and the God of Isaac—in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Ch. xl ix. 10. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, untii Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. The word Shiloh in Hebrew may bear several

significations according as it is written; but the most proper one in this place seems to be this, he that is to be sent, which completes the sense of the text. Numb.

xxiv. 17, 19. There shall come a star out of Jacob and a sceptre out of Israel—out of

Jacob

Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion. Deut. xviii. 15. *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken.* These texts collected from the books of Moses, are indeed general and indefinite; their purport being chiefly to suggest that the *seed* or one born of a *woman* should overcome the power of the Devil; that the posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob should be a *blessing to all nations*, that a royal *sceptre* should be settl'd in the family of Judah, and not be utterly extinct till the coming of Shiloh, unto whom *the gathering of the people should be*; and accordingly Herod a King did reign in Judah at Jerusalem when Christ was born; tho' some ages before the sceptre had departed from Judah, and so continu'd a long succession of years under the High Priests: that lastly God would raise from among the Jews (or Israelites) *a prophet like unto Moses*, that is, one who should be both a *Prophet and a Lawgiver*, and a victorious conqueror, such a one only being properly like unto Moses: I say, these several particulars are in general foretold in the passages above cited,

cited, which we may reasonably suppose were design'd as the foundation of those further manifestations of the divine Counsels, which were by degrees at certain periods of time to be more distinctly unfolded to that chosen people through whom God intended to carry on the whole series of the divine predictions and appointments.

From this first, as it were, sketch or abridgment of the divine purposes towards mankind, we are conducted by a further opening of the mysterious Roll, to some more particular communications of the

<sup>1 Sam. xiii.</sup> divine Counsels vouchsaf'd to the man according to God's own heart, deliver'd by the Prophet Nathan, 2 Sam. vii. 12, 16. And when thy (David's) days be fulfill'd, and thou shalt sleep with thy Fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom—and thine house, and thy kingdom shall be establish'd for ever before thee; thy throne shall be establish'd for ever. See 1 Kings ii. 4. and viii. 25. Ifaiah xi. 1, &c. explains and enlarges the purport of this promise to David, And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem (or out of David the son) of Jesse, and a branch shall grow

grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, and then follows a long description of his justice, righteousness, and the great blessings that wou'd be liberally dispens'd to the world through him. See this interpretation of the said promise confirm'd by *Jeremiah*, xxiii. 5, 6. and xxxiii. 14, 15, 16. See the same in *Ezekiel*, xxxvii. 24—28. *Hosea* iii. 4, 5. adds a further particular, tho' the children of Israel shall abide many days (that is in the Prophetick stile, many years) without a King, and without a Prince—afterwards shall they seek the Lord their God, and David (that is the Rod or Seed or son of David) their King in the latter days. The result of these Prophecies is evidently this, that that excellent Person, in whom (as before had been foretold of him) all Nations were to be bless'd, was to be a descendent from David; that he was to be a king, or reign in a kingdom, and that through him the kingdom of David should be establish'd for ever; but that was to happen in the latter days, that is a long time after; and according to the Prophetick meaning, when God shou'd found a new covenant with his people.

See Deut.  
iv. 30. and  
xxxii. 29.  
Jer. xxiii.  
20. and  
xxx. 24.  
Dan. ii. 28.  
and x. 14.

But

But furthermore, this *kingdom* was not to be confin'd to, this *Rod or branch of the stem*, or of *David* the son of *Jesse*, was not to rule over *Judah* only, or even over *Israel*, all the kingdoms of the world were to become subje&t to him: Thus *Isaiah xi. 10.* *In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse — to it shall the Gentiles seek;* and *xlix. 6, 7.* *And he said, it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserv'd of Israel: I will also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation, unto the end of the earth.* See *c. xlvi. 6, &c.* and *lx. 3—6.* *Psalms ii. 6—8.* and *lxxii. 1, 8, 9, 10, 11,* and *lxxxix. 3, 4, 21—36.* and *cx. 1, 2, &c.* There are also sundry other texts in the sacred volumes concerning the true knowledge and worship of God, to be propagated throughout the *Gentile* world: which consistently with the divine disposition hitherto spoken of, can only be understood of that church and doctrine, which was to be founded and taught by that *Rod or Branch of the stem or Root of Jesse.* See *Isaiah ii. 2.* and *lvii. 6, 7, 8,* and *lx. Micah iv. 1—8.* *Amos ix. 11, 12.*

*Malach.*

*Malach.* i. 11. We may have hitherto observ'd, that the light of divine Prophecy from its first dawn has gone on gradually encreasing, and at last has conducted us to these clear manifestations of the divine purposes, that he who was to be a *Blessing* to the world, was to be a *King* and to preside over *all Nations* in the *latter days*, that is, after the expiration or disannulling of the *Jewish Covenant*, or when all the prophetick types and predictions of the *Jewish œconomy* were fully accomplish'd; let us now proceed in the same light, and attend to some more informing discoveries, whereby we may learn where his first appearance shall be, and how he is to be born or brought into the world:

The particular place we find in *Micah* v. 2.

*Thou Bethlehem Euphrata, tho' thou be little* Mat. ii. 1.  
*among thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall* 5. 6.  
*be (characteristically) come forth unto me, that* Luke ii. 4,  
*is to be Ruler in Israel: whose goings forth*  
*have been from old, from everlasting.* And  
*this whole chapter greatly enlarges upon*  
*the mightiness of his power, and verses 13,*  
*14. in that day—thy graven images\**

\* All idolatrous worship shall be utterly abolish'd thro' the world.

*will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee: and thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands, &c.*

*Isaiah vii. 14. The Lord himself shall*

*Mat. i. 18, give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name*

*25.*

*Immanuel; and lx. 3, 6. Gentiles shall come to thy light, and Kings to the brightness of*

*Mat. ii. 1, thy rising—they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises*

*2, 11.*

*of the Lord.*

We find also his Harbinger or Fore-runner sent to prepare the way before him, by preaching repentance, and raising in the people's minds an attentive expectation of the near approach of the long expected of all Nations, particularly describ'd by the Evangelical Prophet, *Isaiah*

*Mat. iii. xl. 3, 4, 5. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the*

*Mark i. Luke iii.*

*John i. 22, 23. Lord, every valley shall be exalted, &c. and the glory of the Lord shall be reveal'd, and all flesh shall see it together.*

*Malach. iii. 1. Behold I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the Messenger (ἄγγελος or Angel) of the Covenant, whom ye delight in*

(viz. the Messiah) behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts; and c. iv. 5, 6. Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet, before the coming of that great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.

Compare  
Mat. xvii.  
11, 12, 13.  
and c. iii.  
Luke iii.

From this holy Messenger or forerunner, it naturally follows, that we carefully attend to what the mighty One himself will be, or what in particular is to be his office and ministry; and we see it very distinctly foretold, that he was not only to be an everlasting King and a Prophet, but a Preacher of Righteousness, a worker of wonders, and also a Priest for ever: So we read Psalm cx. 1, 2, 4. *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the Rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever.* Isaiah lxi. 1, 2. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of*

*of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.* And

*See Mat. ix. 27, &c. and c. xi. 5, &c. and c. xii. 22. &c. and c. xx. 30, &c. and c. xxi. 14. and c. xv. 30.* *They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God—then the eyes of the blind shall be open'd, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopp'd, then shall the lame man leap as an Hart, and the tongues of the dumb sing.*

Even his solemn entrance into *Jerusalem*, amidst the acclamations of the People is minutely describ'd, *Zech. ix. 9. Rojice greatly, O Daughter of Zion, shout, O Daughter of*

*See Mat. xxi. 2—7.* *Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an Ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an Ass.* I shou'd stretch out the thread of prophecy beyond the bounds necessary to my present design shou'd I insist on the many other particulars relating to *him that was to come*, as we find them in the holy Writers:

I shall therefore now draw towards the conclusion of the blessed life of that divine Minister of God, who was the *desire of all Nations*: and surprizing as it was, every passage and circumstance of it was aforetime the express subject of the Prophetick predictions.

Ifaias c. liii. begins a chapter whetein he treats of this matter in these words, *who bath believ'd our report?* ver. 2. *he bath no form nor comeliness.* Ver. 3. *he is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, we hid as it were our faces from him:* v. 4. *Surely he bath born our griefs, and carry'd our sorrows:* v. 5. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities—and with his stripes we are healed:* v. 6. *All we like sheep have gone astray—and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all:* v. 7. *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he open'd not his mouth, he is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a Sheep before his shearers is dumb, so openeth he not his mouth:* v. 8. *He was cut off out of the Land of the living, for the transgression of my People was he stricken:* and v. 9. *He made his grave with the wicked (being crucify'd between two thieves) and with the rich in his death (entomb'd in a new monument, and embalm'd with rich spices:)* v. 12. *I will divide him a portion with the great, because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the Transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for Lu. xxiii.*

Compare  
Mat. xxvii.  
63.  
Mark xv.  
3, 4, 5.

Mat. xxvii.  
60.  
Jo. xix.

R the 34.

*the transgressors.* Ch. lxiii. 4, 5. *I looked*

<sup>Mat. xxvi.</sup> *and there was none to help:* and ch. l. 6.  
<sup>56.</sup>

<sup>Mark xv.</sup> *I gave my back to the smiters, and my*

<sup>15, 16, 17.</sup> *cheeks to them that plucked off my Hair: I*

<sup>18, 19, 20.</sup> *bid not my face from shame and spitting.*

<sup>67.</sup>

Pf. xxii. 1. *My God, my God, why hast*

<sup>\* Mat.</sup> *thou forsaken me?* see v.v. 6, 7, 8, 13. v.16.  
<sup>xxvii. 46.</sup>

*They pierced my hands and my feet, (see*

*Zech. xii. 10.) v. 18. They part my gar-*

<sup>\* Jo. xix.</sup> *ments among them<sup>a</sup>, and cast lots upon my*

<sup>23, 24.</sup> *vesture: and Pf. xxxiv. 19, 20. Many are*

*the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord*

*delivereth him out of them all; he keepeth*

<sup>\* Jo. xix.</sup> *all his bones, not one of them is broken<sup>b</sup>.*

<sup>32, 33.</sup> *and Pf. lxix. 21. They gave me gall for my*

*meat, and in my thirst they gave me vine-*

<sup>\* Mat.</sup> *gar to drink<sup>c</sup>.*

<sup>xxvii. 34,</sup> <sup>48.</sup>

We have in the last place the Prophet

Daniel distinctly pointing out in a prophetick Stile the very time when this so stupendous an event was to happen, ch. ix.

24—27. *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint*

*the most Holy. Know therefore and understand,*

stand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerufalem, unto the *Messiah* the Prince, shall be seven weeks; and threescore and two weeks, the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times: and after threescore and two weeks, shall *Messiah* be cut off, but not for himself—And he shall confirm the Covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.

But notwithstanding that God, most gracious to and for the sake of man, permitted this most *holy* and righteous *Branch* of *David* to be subjected to these indignities, and most painful sufferings, even to a shameful and ignominious death, so that he was shut up in the shades of death three days, (that is, part of three days.) God made his tomb glorious by raising him from the dead according to antient predictions, (and which was typify'd by the Prophet *Jonah*) as we read *Pf. xvi. 10.* c. i. 17.  
and ii. 10. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,* (that is, *ādēs*, the state of the dead) *neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* And furthermore, he not only triumph'd over the power of death by his resurrec-

tion, and purchas'd to us the same blessed prerogative and advantage, but with all the divine ensigns of an heavenly conqueror. From this lower Region of his Ministry and Sufferings fully accomplish'd according to all the foregoing prophecies con-

*Mar. xvi.* cerning him, he *ascended up on high to open*  
*19.*

*Luc. xxiv.* *the Gates of Heaven,* there to appear con-

*51.* tinually before God and make intercession for

*Act. i. 9.* us. So the same inspir'd Pen in a most lofty Strain expresses it, *Ps. lxviii. 17, 18.* *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of Angels, the Lord God is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place.* *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive* (triumphing over the power of the devil, of sin and of death) *thou hast received* (before purchasing by thy labours and sufferings) *gifts for men,* (pardon and remission for their sin, and many most divine graces for them) *yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.*

"Tis obvious upon this chain and connection of divine prophecy so regular and so consistent, carry'd down almost from the very first beginning of time for the

space

space of above three \* thousand years, and determining so exactly in the *suffering, death, resurrection and Ascension of our Blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ*, I say, carry'd down by men living at *sundry times*, greatly distant from and absolutely unknown to one another, as to personal knowledge or commerce; I say 'tis obvious, 'tis next to impossible not to make these following observations.

1<sup>st</sup> That every one of the above-cited Texts, form'd into one collection, and pointing different ways at one and the same Person, and all of them so evidently fulfill'd in the Person of our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, is designedly prophetical, and relative to something as foretold to happen in after-times. This can bear no question. The Books whence these Texts are taken are evident proofs.

2<sup>dly</sup>, This so continu'd and lasting a string of prophetick sayings utter'd by such numbers of holy men absolute strangers to one another, cannot possibly be imagin'd to be a crafty contrivance and combination of artful and designing men: for

\* Malachi the last Prophet liv'd in the year of the world 3544, and 404 years before Christ.

the whole of their writings manifestly be-  
speaks them to have been men of great  
simplicity and integrity, and that they had  
no other thing in view but truth and the  
good of mankind ; besides, men so dis-  
tant from one another, both as to time  
and place, cou'd not possibly join in any  
such contrivance and subtlety ; neither  
cou'd they propose to themselves any em-  
olument, honour, or other advantage  
from a design so carry'd on ; and 'tis ab-  
surd to fancy, that numbers of men one  
after another wou'd continue to amuse  
and impose upon the world for no end  
not advantage at all : And again, how cou'd  
those that went before hope or suppose,  
that so stupid an imposture begun by  
them wou'd be carry'd on by others after  
them for so long a succession of years ; or  
if this were done, that the rest of their  
fellow-citizens wou'd give any heed to it ?  
Lastly, why shou'd such an extravagant  
imposture as this be set up, carry'd on,  
and be awfully receiv'd and entertain'd only  
in *Judea*? Were not the *Chaldaean*, the  
*Ægyptians*, the *Greeks* and *Romans*, men  
of greater abilities as to craft and strata-  
gems and polite literature, and exceeding-  
ly

ly more addicted to superstitious imaginations? How comes it we have not so much as a distant hint of such prophetick impostures amongst some of them?

3<sup>dly</sup>, It is consequently impossible to ascribe this connection and consistency of Predictions to *Chance*, for that is ascribing it to nothing, and a manifest childish absurdity; and further, how comes it to pass that no such *Chance* ever happen'd before or since?

4<sup>thly</sup>, Therefore it remains, that so regular a context of prophetic history cou'd only be begun and so consistently carry'd on by the counsel and holy *Spirit* of God, who from the fall of the *first man* purpos'd in himself a most gracious system for the recovery and redemption of man; and agreeably to this divine and most gracious system at sundry times communicated to men an encreasing revelation of his will, intending by that gracious method to keep up in them a constant attention and expectation of some great good he purpos'd to do for them, and which in the fullness of time he divinely perfected by the *Mission* and *Sacrifice*, *Resurrection* and *Ascension* of our *Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ*.

I say such a context of prophetick history  
 cou'd only be begun and carry'd on by the  
 holy Spirit and power of God; for St. Pe-  
ter affirms, no prophecy of the Scripture is  
 2 Ep. i.  
 20, 21.  
 ter affirms, *no prophecy of the Scripture is  
 of any private interpretation*, that is, the  
 Prophet himself did not fully apprehend  
 the clear and distinct purport of the pre-  
 diction he deliver'd; *for the Prophecy came  
 not in old time by the will, or invention or  
 design of man; but holy men of God spake  
 as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost.*

5<sup>thly</sup>, and lastly, it is evident to any one  
 that is tolerably conversant in the history  
 of the Gospels and of our Blessed Saviour's  
 life, that every one of the above-cited  
 prophetic texts were according to the  
 nature of them, or the natural purport of  
 them, (unless any one will absurdly say  
 that they meant nothing at all) properly  
 and only fulfil'd in our Lord Jesus Christ:  
 and the natural consequence of so mani-  
 fest a completion of such a series of pre-  
 dictions shou'd be to excite our attention  
 to consider it with an earnest application  
 and intention of mind; and, as every im-  
 partial and unprejudic'd *Freethinker* can-  
 not but observe a surprizing relation to  
 and connection of the above Prophecies  
 with

with the life and actions of our blessed Redeemer, finally to fix in him an honest and immovable belief in the divine Saviour of men and Pastor of our souls.

As to myself, I sincerely profess, (if I know myself at all) that I have no worldly view in embracing the faith and doctrine of my Blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God, but am purely drawn to it by a thorough conviction of mind after a long and earnest, and, I am persuaded of myself, truly sincere (whatever my Church Preferments may be) enquiry into the force of all those arguments that reason and the Divine Power have furnish'd me with in proof of it; and likewise of all those arguments that I cou'd any where meet with in opposition to it. And therefore I take this opportunity to declare, that if I was aware of any solid or plausible objection or argument that cou'd with any colour of reason be urg'd against the reality and truth of the Christian Revelation, I wou'd not omit to give it a place here, and the best answer to it I am capable of: or if I was pendulous in my judgment, whether such an objection was not of such weight as to be of an equal

equal ballance with the motives of our faith in Christ, I wou'd not delay to acknowledge my suspense in so doubtful a case, and in consequence declare myself on the side of absolute liberty in all religious controversies, and an utter enemy to all restraints but such as the necessity of social life suggests for the external quiet and security of mankind.

As to the subject of this chapter, I know of no exception that can be made under any pretext of derogating from the force of the above collected Prophecies in proof of Christ our Messiah, but this, *viz.* That many of them are scatter'd and mingl'd among other subjects, and seem to be thrown in as odd impertinent periods, rather than intended predictions of so important an event as the birth, life, sufferings and death of so divine a Person as the Son of God. But to this it may be easy to give an answer : 1<sup>st</sup>, Many (I may say most) of the above-collected prophecies, were deliver'd in a circumstance, which plainly manifested that they were utter'd as prophetick predictions, and intended to work in men an expectation of some great good design'd by God in be-

half

half of men. 2<sup>dly</sup>, As to those few texts that lie, as it were, imperceptibly blend'd in the Sacred Writings, it easily appears to us that live after the fulfilling of them, that they were real prophecies; because they can bear no other meaning, and were relative to nothing else that ever happen'd; and as the other parts of the composition with which they are mix'd appear to be rational and regular, and form a proper context of discourse written with a serious design and application; so there can be no doubt but the Holy Spirit mov'd the sacred Penmen to transmit to us those prophetick lines, that they might with many other instances more undeniably point out that Divine Person who was to come into the world, when he made, or when after he had made his blessed appearance among men. And their being scatter'd in a mixture of other subjects is not any thing singular, since this was the usual manner of writing among the other Easterns also, as I have before taken notice of, *ch. 5. p. 210--213.* And moreover (as I there observ'd) such is the nature of prophecy, that some obscurity was necessary to those prophetic

texts, in order that the divine dispositions might not too much interfere with the freedom of action in men; which dispositions had they been so express'd, that is, had God's prophetick history been so deliver'd as to have been plainly understood by all men, they cou'd never have obtain'd their due completion, but by the particular interposition of the Divine Power \*. I think this a perfect solution to the exception above suggested, or to any other of the like nature.

I will conclude this chapter with an observation upon the present state of the Jews. It was foretold by Moses, Deut. xxviii. (and in many other places both of his and of the prophetic writings) if the *Israelites wou'd not observe and do all God's statutes and commandments*, that, among other curses that shou'd befall them, v. 25. *They shou'd be remov'd into all the kingdoms of the earth:* v. 37. *They shou'd become an astonishment, a proverb, and a By-word among all Nations;* where (v. 65.) they shou'd find no ease, no rest for the sole of their feet, but have a trembling heart, and sorrow of

\* See ch. 5. pag. 212.

mind. *Jerem. xxx. 11.* That notwithstanding the Lord is (still) with them, to save them: that is, though God makes a full end of all other Nations whither they are scattered, yet he will not make a full end of them, but correct them only in measure. And (*Isa. x. 21.*) that a Remnant of them shou'd always continue: (and *c. xlivii. 5, 6.*) that God wou'd bring them from the East, and gather them from the West, from the North and from the South; (and *ch. xi. 11, 12.*) set his hand again the second time to recover the Remnant of his People from Assyria, Ægypt, Pathros, from Cush, Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and from the Islands of the Sea: and gather together the outcasts of Judah from the four corners of the Earth.

Do not we ourselves behold a manifest completion of these prophecies concerning the miserable dispersion and vagabond state of the Jews? Is there a Nation under heaven, where history or Travellers do not inform us of Jews abiding there? Are they not, wherever they are, a distinct People by themselves, tho' never so small a Residue? Are they not in all places subject to the will and pleasure of the state where they live, without the benefit

benefit of any law as *Jews*? Have they not always been, and are still look'd upon with reproach and contempt? are they not a *By-word*, a *Proverb* to all other men, and often treated with great hardness and exactation, often despoil'd of their riches, to serve the turns of state? And yet for all this, they will not forsake their religious profession; they intermarry among themselves only, and separate themselves every where from all other men, and continue united as kindred, and as a Remnant of that once favourite People of God, still persevering almost against all hope in an unshaken belief and trust, that they will at last be receiv'd again into the divine favour and protection as of old. Can this be said of any other Nation of the Earth, whose Inhabitants have been forcibly driven thence by more powerful Invaders! Where are the ancient *Chaldeans*, *Babylonians*, *Affyrians*, or their descendants? where are the *Egyptians*, and the original possessors and their descendants of the *Grecian Isles* and *Commonwealths*, the *Aborigines* of *Italy*? they are either utterly extinct, or are so blended in the common mass of mankind, that even the very

name

name of their Nation is hardly known. Are not these visible tokens that the Jews are (as they were much more formerly) still under the care of Divine Providence, according to the above-cited prophecies; that they are not utterly rejected by God, but rather under the divine chastisements, and reserv'd for some illustrious Period for the fulfilling of the divine decrees upon them and upon the world in general, as many ancient prophecies plainly declare, *viz.* when *the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in*, that is, when the Gospel of Christ shall have been sufficiently establish'd or propagated in every Nation of the Earth, *to every creature*, more especially at the second coming of Christ, when he will appear with great power and glory, and with all the ensigns of a divine conqueror, to accomplish those high and illustrious predictions concerning his absolute and unlimited dominion over the whole world, having first destroy'd <sup>2</sup>*Theff. ii.*  
*and consum'd that wicked one with the breath*  
*of his mouth*, even the whole power of Satan with the brightness of his coming, and reduc'd the whole world, every Nation of the Earth, *both Jews and Gentiles*,

to

Lu. xxi.

<sup>24</sup>  
Rom. xi.

25.

<sup>2</sup>*Theff. ii.*  
8.

to the Obedience of the Christian Law, and united them into *one Body*, one kingdom and religion under himself their appointed *Head, King and Priest*?

It may be proper on this occasion to observe, that the two *Advents* or appearances of the Messiah as severally foretold in the Scriptures, the first of which was to be of him in a low condition, and as a preacher and founder of a new divine Law and Covenant, erecting only a spiritual kingdom among men, and after many painful sufferings offering himself up a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; the second Advent or coming of the Messiah is to be most splendid and glorious, when all Nations and People are to be subjected to him as their only King, the *Jews* in great prosperity to be restor'd to their Country, and in high esteem of all other Nations; I say, these two Advents of the Messiah not duly attended to as foretold severally in the sacred writings, have been the occasion that the *Jews* in our Saviour's time regarding only those Prophecies that spake of an imperial Messiah rejected him at his first appearance, and that the modern *Jews* have dress'd

up a fable of their own invention in defence of themselves and their forefathers refusing to embrace the doctrine and covenant of Christ, *viz.* That their Prophets in their Predictions make mention of two particular Persons to appear among men; the first of which was to be the son of Joseph, and an humble and suffering one, the other a mighty king and conqueror, who was to subdue all nations, and reduce them under the Jewish yoke. And this second is the only true Messiah they now expect, and will acknowledge and submit to. See the *Spes Israelis*, a Book written on this subject by *Manasse-Ben-Israel*, quoted by the learned Bishop of *Litchfield*, *Defence*, ch. 3. sect. 5. p. 211. And this also has led our modern Infidels to form some ill-grounded objections of misapply'd \* texts of Scripture in opposition to the Christian Belief.

Concerning the first *Advent* or coming of the Messiah I have sufficiently treated through the whole of this chapter. I shall therefore add in this place some few of those many texts of the Scriptures

\* See Scheme of Liter. Proph. suppos'd to be of the late Mr. Collins, p. 166, &c.

which more particularly relate to the second and more illustrious *Advent* or appearance of the same Messiah when *the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in*, before the consummation of all things. And 1<sup>st</sup>, Our Blessed Saviour himself has plainly spoken of his second coming, *Mat. xvi. 27. The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father: and xxv. 31, &c. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, &c.* See *cb. xxvi. 64.* (Compare *Dan. vii. 8, &c.* 1 *Theff. iv. 15.* and 2 *Theff. i. 10.* When he shall come to be glorify'd of his Saints. *Rev. xix. 11, &c.* and *xx. 4.* And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. See *v. 7, &c.*) *Mat. xix. 28.* And Jesus said, verily I say unto you, ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, &c. *Jo. xiv. 3.* I will come again, and receive you unto myself. See *Acts i. 11.*

2<sup>dly</sup>, Agreeably to this plain prediction of Christ concerning his second Advent, the ancient Scriptures make express mention of many particulars relating to the glorious and mighty state of the Messiah which have not as yet been fully verify'd. *Ps. ii. 6, &c.* I have set my King upon my

hill of Sion—I will give thee the heathen  
for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts  
of the Earth for thy possession. Thou shalt  
break them with a rod of iron, and dash  
them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Ps. xxii.  
27, 28. All the ends of the world shall re-  
member, and turn unto the Lord: and all  
the kindreds of the Nations shall worship be-  
fore thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's,  
and he is the Governor among the Nations.  
Dan. ii. 44. And the God of heaven shall  
set up a kingdom, which shall never be de-  
stroy'd—and it shall break in pieces, and  
consume all these kingdoms: and vii. 13.  
xiv. 27. And behold one like the Son of Man  
came with the clouds of heaven—and there  
was given him dominion, and glory, and a  
kingdom, that all People, Nations, and Lan-  
guages shou'd serve him; his dominion is an  
everlasting dominion which shall not pass  
away—and the kingdom, and dominion,  
and the greatness of the kingdom under the  
whole heaven shall be given unto the People  
of the Most High—and all dominions shall  
serve and obey him. See Micah iv. 1—7.  
Zech. xiv. 9. The Lord shall be king over  
all the Earth: in that day there shall be one  
Lord, and his name one.

3<sup>dly</sup>, Concerning the final return from their long dispersion, and captivity, and happy state of the Jews: Isa. lx. 15—22. *Whereas thou hast been forsaken—I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles—and the breast of Kings—for brass I will bring gold, for iron silver, and violence shall be no more heard in thy Land, wasting, nor destruction—the Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light, &c.* and lxi. 4, 5, 6. *They shall build the old wastes, &c.—Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the Alien, your plowmen and vine-dressers—Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves.* See ch. lxv. 17—25. Jerem. xxxii. 40. *I will make an everlasting covenant with them, I will not turn away from them—and they shall not depart from me.* Ezek. xxxiv. 27, 28. *When I have broken the bands of their yoke—they shall no more be a prey to the Heathen—neither bear the shame of the heathen any more.* Amos ix. 15. *I will plant them upon the land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their Land.*

As to the idle dream of some of the modern Jews concerning the two different Persons as foretold by the Prophets, the one an humbl'd and afflicted, the other a glorious and triumphant Messiah, it never once enter'd into the heads of any of their more enlighten'd forefathers ; neither is there any the most distant pretext for such an assertion, the whole current of the Prophecies running and tending to one and the same Person under his different circumstances and states of life. And some of them have in one and the same passage mention'd him under his appearance in both characters : See Isa. liii. 12. *I will divide him a portion with the Great, because he hath poured out his soul unto death : and he was number'd with the transgressors,* &c. Zech. ix. 9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : Behold thy King cometh unto thee having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an As.* Dan. ix. 24, &c. *Seventy weeks are determin'd — to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore, that — unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks — and after threescore*

and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. It is impossible to shut up all avenues to cavil and obstinacy, where clear demonstration cannot be had, and where indeed in the nature of the thing it ought not to be had, as in matters of Religion, where the honour of God is concern'd. For there can be no exercise of faith and a subjection of our understanding to God, no real, humble, and dutiful trust in God, where every thing must be propos'd to us in such a manner, that it is impossible to make any opposition, or even demur to the receiving it. What wou'd become of society, if no law was to be in force to any one, unless it came to him with a perfect demonstration that it was duly enacted, &c? As therefore in this case the welfare of government and social life, (and the natural right every one has to be believ'd and trusted, unless he has forfeited this right) absolutely requires a submission from every one to those particular laws that come to his knowledge so well attested, that he can have no just reason to doubt of their being genuine; so in the matter of religion, where a divine revelation is so propos'd to any one,

that

that he can have no real pretence even to suspect but that it came from God, much more in this case are we bound in conscience and duty to God as our Creator, Governor, and our Judge, to pay our ready and religious obedience to it. What I have already alledged in this and the foregoing chapters, and what I shall further alledge in the following chapters, do and will form so irrefragable a testimony of the truth of the Christian Religion, that nothing under a clear demonstration can be stronger. And therefore I am absolutely persuaded, that all those that are capable of apprehending, and do apprehend such a scale of arguments, and do not embrace the doctrine and truth they recommend, are highly guilty before God: for we may justly say on this, with a certain writer on another occasion, *if we are deceived, thou, O Lord, hast deceived us*\*. But I wou'd not omit to mind our modern infidels of that saying, true in fact, of our divine Master, *Lu. xvi. 31. If they bear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the*

\* Richardus à Sancto Victore, l. 1. de Trinit. c. 2.

**Exod. v.  
7, 8, 9, 10,  
11, 12, 13,  
14.**

**Jo. xi.  
Mat.  
xxviii. 11  
— 15.**

*Dead, or by the proposition of any other method or argument whatever. So Pharaoh was not persuaded by the dreadful and most astonishing wonders wrought by Moses, and therefore he perish'd in his obstinacy; so the Jews were not persuaded to accept and embrace the doctrine of Christ, tho' they were witnesses to his raising Lazarus from the dead; and tho' he himself also (as they full well knew) rose from the dead after his crucifixion and burial; and they also through their obstinacy miserably perish'd, (at least their children) and their posterity are now in a miserable, captive, and vagabond state: and so through their obstinacy will they also perish who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he shall be revealed to take vengeance on them, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.*

## CHAP. VII.

*Some of the foregoing Prophecies are more particularly consider'd and prov'd to have been literally fulfill'd in our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, and in him only.*

IF we sincerely consider the above connected chain of prophecies with an unbias'd and unprejudic'd mind, and void of an obstinate resolution to chicane and cavil at them, we shall undoubtedly, we cannot but acknowledge and receive with great satisfaction and comfort of mind the manifest relation that whole chain has to our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, and to him only. As to those men, who environ themselves with hardness of heart and obstinacy of mind, so that they will not be persuaded, how strong soever and convincing the motives of credibility and persuasion may be, but with a confirm'd stubbornness will set themselves on very wilful, tho' weak attempts, to speak and write

write in opposition to and contempt of them, there is no hope of prevailing on them, tho' one of their Brethren shou'd rise from the dead, and preach the truth to them. And therefore to take pains for the conviction of such men, is in effect to no other purpose, than for the Sower to scatter his grain upon the hard rock. Our chief labour must therefore be, to imitate the preaching of the Apostles to the stiff-neck'd Jews, to offer them the true knowledge of their duty and the terms of everlasting salvation, and at least to furnish the honest and impartial Reader with a context of arguments, whereby he may not only be establish'd in the truth, but also be so fully instructed, that on all occasions, but more especially when in conversation with Infidels, he may be able to give a well grounded and clear account of the Faith and doctrine he has embrac'd.

As to myself, I confess my belief and true sentiment, viz. That there is hardly one of the Prophecies quoted in the foregoing chapter, which has not been literally fulfill'd in our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and in him only, with a reserve

to those which relate more particularly to his second coming. But however, as we are so peremptorily challeng'd to show one Prophecy in the old Scriptures which was so literally fulfill'd in our Blessed Lord Christ, I have here accepted the challenge, and by the grace of God I do not doubt but I shall be able to evince undeniably, (except to such persons as are resolv'd not to be convinc'd) that some of those Prophecies have been so literally fulfill'd in our Blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ and in him only. I say, *some of them*; because it would be too bulky an undertaking to enlarge upon them all, and besides, our Adversaries affect to be satisfy'd with the literal completion of any one of them. And I the rather insist on the Prophecies of the Old Scriptures, because I think the *Mosaic* and the Christian Covenants so closely relative the one to the other, that the Truth of the Gospel cannot subsist without the truth of the ancient and prophetick Scriptures, these being often cited and appeal'd to by our Blessed Lord and his Apostles in proof of Christ's Mission, and of his being the fulfilling of them. I shall examine the Prophecies

phecies in that order I find them quoted in the Gospels. The first is *Mat. i. 23.*

*Behold a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel.* Mat. i. 23.  
Isa. vii. 14.

The Hebrew text, render'd word for word, is this, *Behold a Virgin with child, and bringing forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Himmanu-el.* The LXX or Greek Translation runs thus: *Behold a Virgin shall conceive\*, and shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel.* The literal accomplishment therefore of this Prophecy in our Blessed Saviour must be this, that he was conceiv'd in the womb of a Virgin, that a Virgin brought him forth, and that he was call'd Emmanuel. Now this fact is so plainly deliver'd by St. Matthew, c. i. 18 — 25. *Luc. i. 31, 32.* and *ii. 7.* and *iii. 23.* that I need not enlarge on any further proof. Neither was this ever pretended to be verify'd in the strict sense of the words in any other. But we have some difficulties

\* Εγενετο από θηλης.

to clear up, before the force of this prophetick argument can be allow'd of.

1<sup>st</sup>, The circumstance of the text plainly shews, that it cou'd not have any regard to a long futurity. The case was this: *Abaz King of Judah* was invaded by two neighbouring Kings with their joint forces, *viz. Rasin of Syria, and Pekah of Israel*. *Abaz* was pressing to save himself from this confederate force. *Isaiah* comforts him, and gives him a sign that he shall be secur'd against their confederated strength. The sign is, the certain birth of a son by a young woman. Now how cou'd the birth of a son to happen many hundred years after, be deem'd a sign to *Abaz* of his safety from the joint power of his two enemies?

*Answer.* This is not the whole nor the true case; but the truth of it was this: *Abaz* was a very wicked and idolatrous king, and utterly forsook the Law of the God of his Fathers; 2 *Kin. xvi. 3, 4.* and therefore in this strait did not at all think of imploring the protection of the God of *Israel*, whom he had rejected. *Abaz's* fears were further encreas'd, that the design of the confederate kings was to remove

move him from the throne (and perhaps to extirpate the line of *David*) and set up the son of *Tabeal* in his stead. (*Isa.* vii. 6.) The merciful God of *Israel* therefore, whilst the king and people were in this *Panick*, even giving all God's promises to the Family of *David* and to themselves for lost, God, I say, utterly neglected and unsought for, sent *Isaiab* the Prophet, not to comfort *Abaz*, (who was altogether unworthy of the divine favour) but chiefly at this critical juncture to publish fresh assurances of God's continu'd purpose of establishing the throne of *David*, and of his divine care over their Nation. Because therefore the *counsel* of the two Kings against *Abaz* was to set up a new Royal Family (that of *Tabeal*'s, which we may reasonably conjecture was different from that of *Abaz*) God by *Isaiab* assur'd him, that that *counsel shou'd not stand, nor come to pass*, *Isai.* c. vii. 5, 6, 7. and to confirm this particular, that *Isaiab* was not sent to comfort *Abaz*, but purely to renew the divine promises made to the *House of David*, the Prophet tells *Abaz*, (v. 7.) If ye will not believe, ye shall not be established, ye shall not prosper in your undertakings.

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And accordingly, *Abaz* being some time after invaded by the two Kings only with a design to harrafs and spoil his territories, they succeeded to their wish, to the inconceivable Misery of his Subjects, (2 Chron. xxviii. 5—8.) he was also smitten by the *Edomites*, (*ibid.*) *Isaiah* was further commanded a second time to speak Isa.vii. 10. again to *Ahaz*, saying, *Ask thee a sign, &c.* but *Abaz* said, (not out of a sentiment of his unworthiness, or of a reverential submission to God) *I will not ask, &c.* Then *Isaiah* directing his discourse (not to *Abaz* in particular, but in general) to the *House* of David, *Hear ye now* (at this time of your despondency) *O House of David!* is it a small thing for you to weary men (grieving all good men by your continu'd impieties against the God of your Fathers) but will ye weary my God also, and provoke him to abandon your House and Kingdom? *Therefore the Lord himself* for his own sake, and for his servant *David's* sake in confirmation of the promises made to him, *shall give you a sign, Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.* Butter and honey shall be eat, that he may know

know to refuse the evil and chuse the good; that is, he shall be nourish'd as other infants are to the age of knowing good and evil. Here then *Isaiah* delivers plainly two distinct prophecies; the former was peculiar to *Abaz* at that time concerning the raising the siege of *Jerusalem*, and de-sisting of the two Kings from their joint design to dethrone *Abaz*, and set up another on his throne: the latter was general to the House of *David*, on purpose to assure them that it shou'd continue and be established for ever according to the divine promises, and in consequence of that, that a child shou'd be conceiv'd and born to their House of a Virgin, and that this shou'd be an evident Sign to the House of *David*, and to all men, that God wou'd not suffer any intrigues or stratagems of men to defeat the promises he had made. But it may be further

*Reply'd.* The following verse, *For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good, the Land that thou abhorrest (i.e. of thy two enemies) shall be forsaken of both her Kings;* I say, this verse plainly proves that the *Child* here spoken of, is the same with that of the two fore-

going verses, and that was said to be born of a *Virgin*.

*Answer.* Were it not for this verse, there cou'd be no pretext of any doubt concerning this Prophecy as wholly applicable to our Blessed Saviour. However, the difficulty is rather apparent than real; the whole of it being conceiv'd from the particle *For*; which indeed is a very proper rule by which we may judge of the conjunction of propositions and periods in the *Greek, Roman* and modern compositions: but 'tis no certain rule at all in relation to the ancient Eastern, and particularly the Prophetic writings, as may be instanc'd in numberless passages, almost in every chapter of the Prophets; where, sometimes long periods on quite different subjects are interjected, and then the former subject is resum'd and pursu'd; even whole chapters, or a great part of them, are interplac'd between the beginning of a subject and pursuing it on, or repeating it again; for originally every book of the Holy Bible was one continu'd context without any division into Chapters, Verses, &c.

It wou'd be needless to give instances of this particular, since every Chapter of

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the Prophetick Books will supply us with them, especially the Chapters of the Prophecy of *Isaiah*. Thus we may observe that the former part of this seventh Chapter now before us is not a regular connected thread of discourse : Thus again by a careful attention you may observe that, c. ix. v. 6. the Prophet returns again to the subject of the *Child conceiv'd of a Virgin, &c.* (c. vii. 14.) for what he there adds, *for unto us a Child is* (prophetically, for shall be) *born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder : his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of his government there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his Kingdom :* I say this 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> verse of the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter has no connection at all with the foregoing or following subjects, as may be seen ; and moreover this Prophecy cou'd have no agreement at all with either of *Isaiah's Sons*, nor with any other ; and therefore the Prophet can only be understood as again resuming his discourse concerning the *Child foretold to the House of David, c. vii. 14.* and delivering some further particulars

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concerning him, and what a *wonderful* and *mighty* one he was to be for the full accomplishment of all the divine promises. And this also was literally, and will be at his second coming, fulfil'd in our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and in no other, as is most evident.

I have furthermore observ'd and shewn, ch. 5. p. 210--213. that the Eastern compositions of old were not so order'd as to form a continu'd thread of discourse, but that they were an abrupt and broken method of writing; and this also was the particular stile of the Prophets of the Holy Scriptures, and indeed (as I there show'd) necessarily so. To come therefore to the difficulty propos'd in the Reply.

From what has been now said, it sufficiently appears, that the argument of connection precisely does not oblige us to understand these words of the 16<sup>th</sup> verse, *for before the Child shall know to refuse the evil, &c.* I say the argument of connection precisely, denoted by the particle *for*, do's not oblige us to understand those words of the *Child* that was to be *conceiv'd and born of a Virgin*; because the method of the Prophetick writings affords

no proper rule for such an argument. And those words may very properly be apply'd to *Shear-jashub*, *Isaiah's Son*, whom he carry'd with him by God's appointment to meet *Abaz*: for otherwise, why was *Isaiah* order'd to carry his Son with him, but to be a *Sign*, as the Prophet observes, c. viii. v. 18. *I and my Children are for Signs, &c.* For in this verse *Isaiah* delivers a third Prophecy distinct from the two above-mention'd, viz. that *Rezin* and *Pekah*, the two enemies of *Abaz*, should lose their Kingdoms speedily, or before *Shear-Jashub* should grow up to the knowledge of good and evil; and so it came to pass before the end of four years, 2 Kings xv. 30. and xvi. 9. I think the Answer here propos'd to the Reply so plain, so full and satisfactory, that the difficulty suggested in it, is rather apparent than real. I do not pretend however, neither is it possible to stop the mouth of cavil, especially of those that will cavil. All I endeavour at, is, to take the words and the circumstance of the Prophecy, and to evince from thence, that the Prophecy, as such, or as so express'd, was literally fulfill'd, and only literally fulfill'd,

fill'd, in our Lord Jesus Christ. And this to me is as plain as any fact in history.

2<sup>d</sup> *Difficulty.* It may be objected in the second place, that the Hebrew word *Alma* do's not so necessarily signify a *Virgin*, but that it may also be understood of a *young woman*. But allowing the import of it here to be a *Virgin*, it may be understood *ampliative*, (as the Schools term it) just as the *lame walk*, the *blind see*, &c. that is, they that were *lame* or *blind*, being healed, *walk* or *see*, &c. so the young woman that was then a *Virgin*, shou'd soon be marry'd to the Prophet, and after *conceive*, and bring forth a *Son*.

*Answer.* There can be no surer rule to judge of the meaning of a word in any book, than the book itself. If any Author makes use of a word only to signify one and the same thing, it wou'd be to pervert the design of the Author to understand that word in any other meaning. Now it is remarkable, that through the whole Scriptures (for this has been carefully examin'd) the word *Alma* always is us'd to signify a pure Virgin. So it is render'd by the Septuagint or Greek translation, and so it imports, according to the

*Hebrew idiom*, a Virgin shut up from the sight and knowledge of men, as virgins unmarry'd us'd to be among the Easterns. But if the Prophet's meaning had been, that he was speedily to take a young woman or Virgin to wife, and that she shou'd immediately after conceive and bear a Son, why was the Prophecy deliver'd in so solemn a manner, *Bebold a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son?* and not rather and more appositely, *Bebold I shall take a young maid to wife, and she shall conceive and bear me a Son,* &c. This wou'd effectually have answer'd the full design of the Prophecy as relating to *Abaz* in particular. But the Prophecy being address'd in general to the *House of David*, (that is, to the present and future generations of it) and being deliver'd in so particular and solemn an expression, plainly shews, that the Holy Spirit of God had a much more excellent *Child* in view than the Son of *Isaiah*; and one of a much greater importance to the House and Kingdom of *David*, than the Son of a private person and subject, of whom nothing further was to be spoken. The Child therefore here made the subject of *Isaiah's* Prophecy;

phecy, was that *Child* and that *Son*, of whom the Prophet delivers so many sublime and lofty characters, c. ix. v. 6, 7. *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, &c.*

As to what follows in the objection, that a *Virgin* shou'd speedily be marry'd to the Prophet, shou'd after conceive and bear a Son, this is plainly foreign to the text, and defeats the prime intent of it, which in express words declares, that a *Virgin* (not a wife) shou'd conceive and bring forth a Son, and that this was to be a *Sign* to the *House of David*. Now where is the *Sign* or wonder, that a young wife shou'd be with child and bring forth a Son, or how does this answer the purpose of so remarkable a Prophecy, and in such a circumstance of time? As to the instances alledg'd, the lame walk, the blind see, the healing of the one and of the other by a miraculous power, is truly a *Sign* and *Wonder*, and so wou'd the Prophet's wife conceiving, &c. have been a *Sign* and a *Wonder*, had she been naturally or by age barren, as *Sara* the mother of *Isaac*, and *Elizabeth* the mother of *John Baptist* were barren. To make therefore the instances,

the lame walk, the blind see apposite and to the purpose, it should have been said, *the barren woman shall conceive and bring forth a Son*, and this wou'd have truly been a *Sign to the House of David*. Evident therefore it is, that this Prophecy of *Isaiah* cou'd in no proper sense be understood of *Isaiah's* future Son, but that it was literally and strictly to the very letter of the word eminently fulfill'd in our Blessed Saviour Christ, who was a wonderful *Sign to the House of David*, and the absolute and most perfect accomplishment of all the divine promises to it.

It is very probable that *Isaiah* himself did not understand the full purport of the Prophecy he utter'd, neither was it necessary he shou'd have understood it. See ch. 5. p. 208, 209. He was but the organ or mouth of the Divine Spirit, which at this time chiefly intended to refresh and keep alive the hopes of the *House of David* and of his people, that however threatening the present dangers might be, God wou'd not fail to make good all his former promises and engagements, and by this means to engage and strengthen their trust and confidence in God, and the trust

of their posterity in God also, that they might always cleave stedfastly to him. And this was always one great design of all the Prophecies of old. For tho' they were not perfectly understood at the time of their delivery, yet it was manifest from them, that their God was continually watchful over them for their good, and that in truth all their miseries and misfortunes were owing only to their wickedness. So also St. Peter informs us, that the *Prophecy of the Scripture is not of any private interpretation*, (that is, it was not understood by the Prophet himself, at least not always so, neither was it always to be apprehended according to that sense the Prophet himself might give it) *for Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man*, (who of himself cou'd know nothing of what was to happen) *but holy men of God spake as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost*; and therefore cou'd give no other meaning to their words of Prophecy than that intended by the Holy Spirit of God.

<sup>2 Pet. i.  
20, 21.</sup>

The Author of the *Scheme of Literal Prophecy* moves in a parade of Authors, whom he plentifully musters up against

the literal interpretation of this Prophecy, because they vary in their explanations of it. I shall leave him the glory of his *much reading*, without following him in such an endless chace, to examin how faithful he is in his quotations, which an honest and an accurate writer, and one that sets up to abolish all imposture, shou'd be remarkably careful of. I confess, I all along suspected his fidelity in his quotations: there are several ways of quoting Authors falsely: you may cunningly cite their very words, which taken by themselves may bear a very bad meaning, and take them in the Author's context, and the sense of them is perfectly good and useful. You may leave significant words out, and so utterly poison the citation: you may add artful words of your own, and so transubstantiate the whole design of the Author. You may read him cursorily over, and quite mistake the Author's meaning, and by quoting the Author, in reality quote only yourself. What leads me to this digression was my seeing the learned Dr. *Clarke's* name amongst his names, (I am apt to suspect they are but names) who I knew to have no sentiments in common with

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the Author of the Scheme as such. *Pag.* 312 of the *Scheme of Literal Prophecy*, the Author marks Dr. Clarke, *Connect. of Script. Propb.* p. 24. as allowing the text, *Behold a Virgin shall conceive* to be literally applicable to *Isaiah's Son*: let the Reader judge of the sincerity of this citation: Dr. Clarke's words in the above cited page are these: " Supposing *Isaiah himself* cou'd possibly " at that time understand them" (those words, *Behold a virgin shall conceive, &c.*) " concerning a Son of his own, to be " born of a young woman afterwards, " who at the time then present was a Vir- " gin; and that his being stiled *Immanuel* " meant nothing more, than that, before " this child was grown up, *Judah* shou'd " be deliver'd from the threaten'd incur- " fions of *Israel* and *Syria* (all which, " notwithstanding the seeming connexion " of the words in the place they stand, is " very difficult to suppose.)" There is ground from hence to conceive, that the Author of the Scheme is too partial to himself in amassing such a cloud of names as favouring his notions, when in truth 'tis quite otherwise. But I don't lay any stress upon this particular; I do not at-  
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tend to what private Authors say, but to what the holy Prophet inspir'd by the Divine Spirit solemnly delivers: And therefore I have not consulted many Authors; I often think that labour a mispending my time, and an occasion of blinding and darkning ideas, and of perplexing the truth, but seldom a proper method of removing those intricacies and difficulties with which important truths are often beset. My endeavour has been, to take the Prophetick words as they lie before us, carefully to consider them with a just regard to the circumstance of time and place wherein they were deliver'd, and by the additional help of the knowledge of their accomplishment in our Blessed Saviour Christ, to follow that natural meaning they offer, which we can now better judge of after their completion, than the Prophet himself, or any of those that liv'd before our Saviour's time cou'd. And I am persuaded, the interpretation of this so celebrated a Prophecy which I have given, will appear to any impartial and unprejudic'd Reader, a very plain, easy, and perfectly literal one. As to the Author of the Scheme of Literal Prophecy, I do not observe

oblserve that he pretends that the catalogue of Authors he has collected, that, I say, they absolutely disown a proper application of that Prophecy to the birth of our Blessed Saviour intended as such by the Holy Spirit. All that can be gather'd from them is only this, that they have undertaken to make the application variously and different ways from one another: but this in truth is no objection against the Prophecy's being perfectly adapted to the birth of our blessed Saviour, since all those Authors unite in the main point, *viz.* that the principal design of it was the conception and birth of our Blessed Lord by a pure Virgin, and not merely as a young woman, and that they all discover in that Prophecy a manifest conformity to the conception and birth of our Blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ, and a full and perfect completion of it in him. And this I cannot discover but from the letter of the Prophecy, and from the time and circumstance of it, according as I have hitherto explain'd it.

3<sup>d</sup> *Difficulty.* 3<sup>dly</sup>, It may be objected, that our Blessed Lord was called *Jesu*, not *Emmanuel*. But this is easily resolv'd. For,

For, 1<sup>st</sup>, it is well known that this phrase of scripture *shall be called*, is of the same import as *shall be*. 2<sup>dly</sup>, Therefore the name *Jesus* signifies *Saviour*; and he was sent as the *Son of God* to establish a new divine Law from God, and reconcile the whole world to God, and save them from their sins, and the punishment due to them. Is this not truly to be an *Immanuel*, and may he not be *called* so by all men? 3<sup>dly</sup>, This appellation can in no wise be apply'd to *Isaiah's Son* after born: for he was call'd *Maher-Shalal-hash-baz*, which is by interpretation, *in making speed to the spoil, he hastneth the prey*. So that this suggests a very clear argument that the text, of which we are treating, cou'd have no relation to *Isaiah's Son*.

*Isai. viii.*  
1, 2, 3.

*Isa. viii.*  
3, 4.

4<sup>th</sup> *Difficulty.* 4<sup>thly</sup>, It may be said, that the Prophet after mentioning the birth of his Son (*Maher-Shalal-hash-baz*) adds, *for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My Father and my Mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria*; that is, by conquest he shall seize upon the territories of the Kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, there-

therefore this is the child spoken of in the foregoing chapter, v. v. 14, 15, 16. But neither is this difficulty urgent. In the foregoing chapter the Prophet foretold in general that the kingdoms of *Syria* and *Israel* shou'd have their heads taken away from them, and that so speedily, as *Shear-jashub* the young Son of *Isaiah*, whom he carry'd by God's appointment to appear with him before *Ahaz*, shou'd not have attain'd to the knowledge of *good and evil*, before this event came to pass; which happen'd in about two years time. In this eighth chapter the same Prophecy is carry'd on and explain'd, that the two kingdoms of *Ahaz's* enemies shou'd moreover be deliver'd into the power of the king of *Affyria*, who shou'd despoil their capital cities: and the time for this was before the arrival of a new-born male infant at the age of articulating these words, *My Father, my Mother*. So that this exactly verifies what the Prophet appeals to, v. 18. of this eighth chapter, *Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel.*

And now having minutely examin'd and weigh'd every difficulty, even every scruple

scruple that might seem to be of any weight in the counter-ballance against the literal accomplishment of this celebrated Prophecy in our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, I will conclude with contracting the force of my interpretation and explanation of it in a few propositions. *Abaz*, an impious and idolatrous son and successor of *David*, is besieg'd in *Jerusalem* jointly by two powerful kings with a design to dethrone him, and set up another king in his stead, (probably one who was not descended from *David*:) The House of *Judah* and the People were under a grievous dread, that God had forgotten them and the promises made to *David*. God, unsought after, sends his Prophet *Isaiah*, to publish to them three distinct Prophecies: The first particular to *Abaz*, that the enterprize of the two kings concerning his deposition and the taking of *Jerusalem* shou'd be defeated: The second was general, and address'd to the House of *David*, and in that to the people; namely, that notwithstanding the abominable impieties of the king and people, God was so mindful of his promises and engagements to the House of *David*, that for the full accomplishment

complishment of them, *a Virgin shou'd,* by the extraordinary Power of God, *conceive and bring forth a Son*, in whom, as the Prophet expresses it, *ch. ix. v. 7. the government, the throne and kingdom of David shou'd have no end.* The third Prophecy was concerning the kingdoms of *Syria* and *Israel* being *forsaken* of their kings; and this was so speedily to happen, even before *Isaiah's* young Son *Shear-jashub* shou'd know to *refuse evil and chuse good.* That *Isaiah's* expression, *Bethold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.* cou'd not properly be apply'd to the Prophet's Son born of his wife, because this *conception* was declar'd to be of a *Virgin*, not of a *Wife*; and besides, had this been meant of the Prophet's Wife, it shou'd have been signify'd in the Prophecy, and not be usher'd in with *God will give you a sign, Behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.* that the ancient Prophecies of the Scriptures were not intended to be clear declarations of future things to those that utter'd, and that then or after heard or read them before their completion. There were two principal views in all those prophecies, the one was to awaken and preserve in God's People

an attention and expectation, and a religious confidence, that God always preserves a watchful and a fatherly providence over them, and that one time or other, when he saw good, he wou'd amply fulfill all his promises to them: The other view was, that at the time of the fulfilling of those Prophecies and afterwards, men might acknowledge the truth of them, and stedfastly embrace, and receive, and believe in that excellent Person in whom they were so fulfill'd: That *Maber-shalal-bash-baz* cou'd not be the Son conceiv'd of a Virgin, for he was conceiv'd of a Wife, and he was not a sign to the *House of David*, but only was a sign of the seizure of the spoils of *Damascus* and *Samaria* by the king of *Affyria*, and of a further explanation of the Prophecy mention'd in general, c. vii. 16. and moreover, he was not called, neither was he in any proper sense, *Emmanuel*, or God with us. Lastly, therefore, this divine Prophecy cou'd be, and was literally fulfill'd only in our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

A further parallel and confirmation of this Prophecy may be that of *Dan.*ii. 34, 45. *Thou sawest that a stone was cut out of*

the mountain without hands, which smote the image upon his feet—and brake them in pieces: and 35. *And the stone—became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.* Here the Holy Spirit of God has in view under a figure the same event with that of the Child to be *conceiv'd and born of a Virgin*, with an explanatory (but figurative) description of the mighty things to be accomplish'd by him. In *Isaiah*, a child is to be *conceiv'd in the womb of a Virgin*, a Son to be born of a Virgin, who is to be *God with us*, or in *Hebrew Immanuel*: in *Daniel* a little stone is *cut out of a mountain without hands*, (that is, not by the labour or help of man) which breaks a huge mass of an image to pieces, that is, a Son not begotten by man, and meanly born as to outward circumstances, is to prevail over the most powerful Empire of the world, and extend his dominion over the *whole Earth*. *Josephus's* \* manner of giving an account of *Nebuchadnezar's* massy image form'd of divers metals is worth observing. After he has distinctly enucleated and expounded the meaning of

\* Antiq. l. 10. c. 11.

the four Great Empires prefigur'd by the four metals, he slightly touches the little *stone*, but immediately passes over it, with an excuse that he undertakes to speak only of things already past. Perhaps he was afraid of raising a dangerous jealousy in the *Romans* against his countrymen, and was therefore unwilling to form conjectures concerning so remarkable a part of that prophetic dream. However that be, we that have the happiness to live after the completion of that prophetic *stone*, and of its effect, at least in part, (till the fulness of it at Christ's second coming) can without any hesitation clearly apply it to the Nativity of Christ, and the vast extent of his Gospel far beyond the bounds of the *Roman Empire*, and its triumph over the religion establish'd formerly in that Empire. Even the Religion and Gospel of Christ has in some sort long enjoy'd, and does actually enjoy the Possession of the proud Capital itself; but being there an unhappy mixture of the true Religion of Christ and human policy of the Heathen *Romans*, affects (I fear) the same proud and despotic air as they did of domineering over the whole world, even over temporal estates

estates and kingdoms where they dare assert it, at least over the consciences of all men, who have not impartiality and courage enough to shake off her slavish yoke. But this by the way.

I now conclude my discourse on this first Prophecy quoted as relating to our Blessed Saviour, *Behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.* 1<sup>st</sup>, That, taking the words of the Prophecy (*Isa. c. vii. v. 14, 15.*) in their strict and literal sense, they were literally fulfill'd in our Saviour Christ and in him only. 2<sup>dly</sup>, Having solv'd and remov'd some difficulties pretending that that Prophecy had no relation at all to a child to be born some hundreds of years after, and in particular having prov'd that the following (16<sup>th</sup>) verse *for before the Child shall know to refuse the evil, &c.* was a distinct Prophecy from that, *Behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.* I have made it sufficiently and plainly appear that the Prophecy before us, *Behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.* cou'd have no other child in view but our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently that it was in the only strict and literal sense fulfill'd in him. And thus I will venture to affirm, that I

Arguments in Proof of  
have effectually made good my first un-  
dertaking. •

*But thou Beth-leem Ephratah, tho' thou  
be little among the thousands of Judah,  
yet out of thee shall He come forth  
unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel:  
whose goings forth have been from of  
old, from everlasting.* Micah ch. v. 2.  
Mat. ii. 6.

In the Hebrew Bible it is the first verse of the fifth chapter, and word for word runs thus: *And thou Beth-leem Ephratah very little as to thy being (or as to thy account and consideration) in the thousands of Jehudah, out of thee shall be go forth to me to be the (or a) Ruler in Israel: and his goings forth from long ago from the days of the Age, (or according to the Hebrew idiom) from everlasting, or before the Age was.* In the Septuagint or Greek translation it is the second verse as in our Bible, and may be render'd thus: *And thou Bethleem House of Ephratha art the least among the thousands of Judah: out of thee shall be go forth unto me, that he may be a Ruler (or to bear rule) over Israel, and his goings*

goings forth from the beginning, from the days of the Age, that is, from everlasting. Hence therefore the literal fulfilling of this Prophecy must be a person, who, after the delivery of it, *came forth from* (or according to the meaning of it, who was born at) *Bethleem Ephratah*; who after was a *Ruler in Israel*; and whose *goings forth* (or existence) *were from everlasting*. And every tittle and letter of this is exactly true of our Blessed Saviour Christ, and of no other person.

1<sup>st</sup>, As to our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ: *He was born at Bethleem, in the Tribe of Judah, which was called Bethleem Ephratah*, to distinguish it from another *Bethleem* in the Tribe of *Zabulon*: I say our Blessed Lord Christ was born at *Bethleem the city of David*, as both St. *Matthew*, c. ii. 1. and St. *Luke*, c. ii. 4 — 7. relate; and consequently our Blessed Lord Christ may literally be said *to come out of Bethleem*, being the place of his nativity, and the first place he was in. He was also a *Ruler in Israel*, and literally so, tho' as yet but in a spiritual sense, (of which more a little below) by his founding a new di-

vine Law in *Israel*, and abolishing the old one, and by that means *ruling* in it by his laws, which by degrees utterly prevail'd over the city and polity of *Jerusalem*, and over the whole land of *Palestine*, where the Religion of Christ was embrac'd by great numbers of *Jews*, and greatly flourish'd for a long succession of years under Christian Emperors; and might have still continu'd to flourish even to the second Advent of our Blessed Law-giver, had not the faithful of Christ been seduc'd by their too great temporal felicity, and carry'd to many unhappy divisions among themselves; so that by degrees having forsaken and corrupted the purity and simplicity of the Christian doctrine, they became an easy prey to an ideot but growing power, a profess'd and invincible enemy of the Christian Name, which is now in great part banish'd from, or under the despotic slavery in that sacred land, where it was at first so happily planted. But the Empire and *Rule* of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ will be most absolute, and the intent of this Prophecy be fully perfected, when before the *consummation* of all things he shall appear a second time,

not

not to reign over *Israel* only, but *unto the ends of the earth*, even over all nations, as a most glorious Prince, and King, and Conqueror. See ch. vi. p. 256—260.

Lastly, *his goings forth* were most strictly of old, even *from everlasting*; i. e. we have no account when he began to be. He says of himself, *Jo. viii. 58. Before Abraham was, I am:* and the same Apostle and Divine says, c. i. 1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* It is to be observ'd, that the Prophecy does not say, *whose goings forth out of Bethleem were from everlasting;* but, *whose goings forth were from everlasting,* that is, who *existed from everlasting.* And this is most perfectly true concerning our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, according to the doctrine he has taught, and fully confirm'd to us. From these observations it most undeniably follows, that we have just reason to appropriate this Prophecy of *Micah* in the true literal and perfect meaning of it to our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. And I further

2<sup>dly</sup> affirm, That this Prophecy cannot in any such meaning relate to any other person,

person. Indeed after the days of the Prophet *Micah*, who liv'd in the reigns of *Jotham*, *Akaz* and *Hezekiah*, (*Mic. i. 1.*) there never was a *Ruler in Israel*, that we read of, who came forth from *Bethleem*. To this it may be said, that

*Zerubbabel*, who was lineally descended from *David*, was a *Ruler in Israel*, being the Head of the *Jews* that return'd to *Jerusalem* after their seventy years captivity in *Babylon*, and that his progenitor *David coming out of Bethleem*, his posterity might be said to come also from thence, properly enough to answer the purport of this Prophecy, which was to ascertain and comfort the *Jews*, that tho' they shou'd be dispossess'd of their lands, and forc'd away into captivity in punishment of their boundless transgressions, yet that they shou'd return and be govern'd by one of the House of *David*, who came originally out of *Bethleem*.

*Answer.* This is a very strange method of unfolding the mystery of Prophecy, and of applying the terms and phrases of it. Let us therefore consider the time, and circumstance, and words of this Prophecy, and see how it can be adapted to the

the person of Zerubbabel. The Prophet in the three first chapters of this Prophecy treats chiefly of the idolatries and unbounded wickednesses of *Israel* and *Judah* of his time, and (c. iii. 12.) concludes, *Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest*; that is, *Jerusalem* shall be destroy'd, and lie desolate in her ruins. The fourth chapter begins with a description of the prosperous state of God's People in the *last days*: and v. 10. the Prophet abruptly returns to speak of their future great misery and captivity, and then again resumes the style of comforting them, (v. 12, 13.) *The Lord — shall gather them — I will make thine horn iron, and thy boos brass, and thou shalt beat in many pieces many people, &c.* Then follows the text now before us attended with many remarkable particulars, as that this *Ruler shou'd be great unto the ends of the earth*, (c. v. 4.) that the remnant of Jacob *shou'd be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord — among the Gentiles, as a Lyon among the beasts of the forest*, (v. 7, 8.) &c.

We

We are now to compare these predictions of the Prophet *Micah* with the history of *Zerubbabel*. And our very entrance upon an application of this Prophecy to him seems at once to be precluded. For, as his name testifies, signifying *Exul at Babel or Babylon*, *Zerubbabel* was born at *Babel or Babylon*; and we never read that he was at *Bethleem*, at least till after his journey from *Babylon* with the captive *Jews*; and till after his being nominated Governor of the *Jews* by *Cyrus*, he cou'd not have seen *Bethleem*. But the Prophecy under our consideration expressly declares, that the *Ruler* there spoken of was to *come out of Bethleem* before he was *Ruler*. But perhaps you will reply, his ancestor *David came from Bethleem*: Very well: And had the Prophet express'd it, that *he*, whose family or progenitor came out of *Bethleem*, was to be *Ruler*, &c. the above interpretation might pass. But to pretend that, because a great ancestor above five hundred years before came out of *Bethleem*, and the descendant from him came out of (being born at) *Babylon*; to pretend, I say, that therefore this descendant can ac-

cording to any rules of speech be said to come out of Bethleem, is an intolerable strain of words, and an extravagant application of prophetic expressions, which overthrows the whole design of Prophecy, committing it to the caprice of every imagination.

The second particular mention'd in the text cannot with any colour of an application be understood of the person of Zerubbabel: the words of it are these, *Out of thee (Bethleem) shall be come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel.* Now Ezra, c.iv. 14. relates, that Zerubbabel was constituted by *Cyrus Governor* (or, as the margin alters the word, *Deputy*) over the Jews at Jerusalem. So that properly speaking, *Cyrus* was the *Ruler in Israel*, or over the Jews, at that time, Zerubbabel in truth being but a Subject and a subordinate Magistrate under the chief Ruler, confin'd and bound by the instructions and authority receiv'd from his Sovereign. But the *Ruler* mention'd in the Prophecy is not spoken of as a subordinate person, but as having sovereign power, as the following verses give us to understand; for (*ch. v. 4.*) he was to be great to the ends

ends of the earth, and to accomplish mighty things. See the following verses.

The third particular taken notice of by the text is, that *bis goings forth were from everlasting*; and here seems to be a full stop put to an application of this Prophecy to Zerubbabel. Notwithstanding, a *Salvo* is found out to accommodate even this hard article, *viz.* God decreed from *everlasting*, that *Zerubbabel shou'd be constituted Ruler* of the captive Jews at their return to rebuild the temple and city of *Jerusalem*. This indeed is a far-fetch'd solution, but to very little purpose. For at this rate every the most trivial thing that happens, is *from everlasting*: for nothing can happen but what God has foreseen from everlasting, and decreed either absolutely that it shou'd be, or that he permitted it to be. But does this authorize such an affirmation as this, 'The present year 1730 was from everlasting?' Can any thing be more absurd, more pernicious to the use of speech, than such an abuse of words?

Hence therefore it is very evident, that this text of *Micah* can by no means be brought to accord with the person and

office

office of Zerubbabel: and it is as evident, that there never was any other person (except our Blessed Lord) to whom that text cou'd be suppos'd to have any relation in a proper or literal sense. Therefore it is evident, that, as every particular of it so perfectly corresponds to the life and character of our Blessed Lord Christ, as has been prov'd, this Prophecy of *Micah* can be appropriated to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to him only, in the proper and literal purport of it.

It may indeed be objected, that our Blessed Saviour never executed the office of a *Ruler*: and therefore it may be question'd how this Prophecy can be apply'd to him. But the answer is easy: for (as I have consider'd at large, ch. 6. from p. 256 to 260.) according to ancient Prophecies the *Messiah* was to be vested with two characters as a *Ruler*, and to appear severally under them at his two different Advents, or showing himself to the world. The first character was wholly a *spiritual* one, by reason of the extraordinary things he was to do and to go through during his first appearance among men: for his first employ was to found and publish a new

new law to the world which shou'd be general to all men, to teach the true knowledge of God, and a true and acceptable worship of God, powerfully to sow the heavenly seeds of virtue by his example and doctrine, to destroy the works of the devil and the seeds of vice and wickedness, and at last to offer himself up a most unspotted and meritorious sacrifice for the satisfaction of the sins of all men. The nature and state of such a pure spiritual ministry and character was altogether incompatible with the grandeur and majesty of a temporal Sovereign; and during this his spiritual *Rule*, he was rather to reign over the hearts and minds than over the bodies of men, who were to be induc'd to submit to his divine laws by the power of spiritual motives only, not by any bodily compulsion or restraint. Concerning the power and prevalency of this spiritual Reign of Christ over a great part of the world, we are sufficient witnesses, that I need not enforce the testimony of it.

The other character of the Messiah will be at his second coming, that of a most glorious and all-powerful Emperor; and

to him all the Powers of the whole earth, every Tribe, People and Nation will bow and do homage, and acknowledge him as their only Lord and King. This Triumphant and Royal Ministry of the Messiah remains yet to be fulfill'd; but it will most certainly be fulfill'd, according to many plain Prophecies concerning it, mention'd cb. 6. p. 258, &c.

As to Christ's *goings forth* or existence from everlasting, the Apostle, *Heb. i. 1, 2, 3, 5.* styles him *the Son of God, and heir of all things, by whom also God made the worlds; the brightness of his (God's) glory, and the express image of his Person, upholding all things by the word of his power.* The same Apostle (*v. 4, 6.*) declares him *better than the Angels, and that the Angels worship him,* (*v. 8.*) that *his throne is for ever and ever.* These sublime characters, which may be also drawn out of the ancient Scriptures, demonstrate that the Person of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ was existing before the foundation of the world was laid, and are an incontestable warrant to apply to him these words of the Prophecy, whose *goings forth have been from everlasting, or of which we know no be-*

ginning. And thus I will in full confidence conclude, that this Prophecy of *Micah* is in all strictness literally proper to and fulfill'd in our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and in him only.

I dare venture to undertake to mention near twenty Prophecies more which were so literally fulfill'd in our Saviour Christ: but this wou'd both extend my labour and the Reader's trouble beyond the limits I intended. And moreover, as one was challeng'd to be sufficient, and as I have thrown in one more, to show that this challenge does not set us an over-hard task, I think I have fully answer'd the demand of this kind of proof of the truth of the Christian Faith. One good and concluding argument is as effectual as a thousand more, and perhaps more to the purpose, because more easily possess'd and retain'd in the mind. And for a like reason I have designedly avoided troubling the Reader with the various opinions of Authors touching the application of this Prophecy to our Saviour Christ. The Scripture is the sole basis of our faith and doctrine, and our only resort: if that is render'd clear and

satisf.

satisfactory, we have no need to puzzle matters with the cavils and disputatious enquiries of men, who seek (or at least seem to seek) rather to display and boast of an extensive reading and knowledge, than to find out the truth of things. If our modern *Freethinkers* and *Sceptics* wou'd read less, and think more; if they wou'd not bewilder and lose themselves in a multitude of authors, if they wou'd study the Holy Scriptures seriously and impartially, and take one or two learned and solid Interpreters for helps and guides, and take into consideration those only objections against Religion which are of any weight or notice; if, I say, they wou'd confine their study and labours within these bounds, they wou'd not fail by the blessing of God upon their honest endeavours to arrive at a very full and satisfactory, and withall a most comfortable conviction of the truth of God's dealing with men as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, and as believ'd and taught by the Christian Church; and furthermore they wou'd not fail, (I trust in God) of becoming excellent examples

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of solid virtue and piety, as they are now (I fear) of strife and debate, and a cause (I don't say intended) of irreligion, profaneness and immorality.

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**C H A P.**

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## CHAP. VIII.

*The Canonical Books of the New Testament are genuin, and contain a true historical account of our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ's birth, doctrines, miracles, sufferings, death and resurrection; all which came to pass according as it had been foretold in the Prophecies above alledg'd in the sixth and seventh Chapters.*

THE scale and connection of arguments I have hitherto form'd in proof of this fundamental article of the Christian Religion, that *Jesus Christ* was the fulfilling of all the divine purposes and predictions contain'd in the Scriptures aforetime concerning that divine *Messenger* who was to be a *blessing to all nations*, by founding and establishing a *new reveal'd Covenant and Religion*, wherein true *righteousness and justification, redemption and eternal salvation* was most gra-

ciously tender'd to all men ; I say, the scale and connection of arguments so form'd is founded upon the supposition, that such a person as *Jesus Christ* was actually born, did preach and teach, and work the many wonders, did most patiently undergo great troubles and sufferings, and the pains of death ; and finally did rise again from the dead, according to the several particular Prophecies collected above, ch. 6. I come now in this Chapter to make good this supposition. And if any historic fact can be deem'd a subject of demonstration, this unquestionably is that fact : for it has the uninterrupted, and, I think, the uncontradicted testimony of both oral and written tradition almost from the very time it was done. Many eye-witnesses of this aggregate fact freely and cheerfully laid down their lives to establish and confirm the truth of it ; great numbers of their disciples gave the same free and cheerful testimony ; and again the disciples of these, and so on successively for the time of three hundred years and more : and this uninterrupted attestation has continually gone on gaining ground every where in every age,

and

and prevailing ; so that by degrees not only all *Asia* from beyond the *Euphrates* Westward, and a great part of *Africa*, receiv'd and flourish'd in the light of the Gospel, but all *Europe* has long been rooted and establish'd in the doctrine of Christ.

And it well deserves our observation, that the first propagation and spreading of the Christian Faith for the first three hundred years, in which time it mightily increas'd and prevail'd, notwithstanding the most malignant opposition that malice, tyranny and human power cou'd practise against it ; I say, it well deserves our observation, that the first propagation and spreading of the Christian Faith was not founded on, nor encourag'd by any worldly motive, help or advantage ; on the contrary, it *was every where spoken against* ; it was subject to continual censure, scorn and ridicule ; the grounds and reasons of it were every where scann'd and weigh'd by men of all professions and of the most distinguish'd abilities, learning and knowledge, and embrac'd by them in the most perilous circumstances with regard to their worldly concerns ; it was contrary to the temporal interests and bodily

pleasures of all men ; it was an avow'd adversary to all the several constitutions in Religion prevailing in all nations, all which universally combin'd by all sorts of violence and oppression utterly to extirpate it. And yet (O the wonderful and irresistible power of God !) this *Faith that overcometh the world*, not only stood its ground in spight of all violence and opposition, but daily extended its bounds on every side ; not only so extended itself, but in a few centuries even exterminated all the professions of the Heathen Theology and Worship, and became itself the sole establish'd Religion, not of the whole *Roman Empire* only, but where the *Roman Eagles* have never yet been able to penetrate. I challenge the whole collection of profane history to single out one fact for which any such like testimony can be produc'd. May we not therefore from hence firmly conclude with the wise *Gamaliel*, *Acts v. 34—39.* If this counsel or this work had been of men, it must unavoidably have long ago come to nought : but that therefore it must certainly be of God, because it cou'd not be overthrown by men, it being in vain for man to fight against God. This

This is a contracted view of the evidence of the Christian Religion, and a very strong and an affecting one it is, the truth of which, those that are sufficiently acquainted with history know perfectly. But for the sake of those that either thro' want of leisure or application have little knowledge of such matters, I shall descend to some further particulars, to render a point of this consequence evident to them. The important question therefore is, *Are the Canonieal Books of the New Testament genuine? Do they give us a true account of the Birth, Life and Actions, Death and Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ?* To this,

I<sup>st</sup>, I answer; it is hardly conceivable how we can have more demonstrative proofs of the genuineness of those Books, than those which Divine Providence has already vouchsaf'd unto us. I beg the Reader will attentively and impartially go along with me thro' the context of this argument, thro' which I shall conduct him with the greatest brevity, but with all necessary perspicuity.

It is indeed very difficult (I think it cannot reasonably be demanded, to fix  
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the time when it was, or the persons who first authoriz'd a *Canon* or determinate number of the Sacred Writings of the New Testament. The Apostles and first Disciples almost immediately after *Pentecost* separated themselves from one another, and travel'd into distant countries to preach in every nation the Gospel of Christ; and the proselytes they gain'd were oblig'd to use great care and discretion, that they might not draw upon themselves unnecessarily the displeasure of those among whom they dwelt. And therefore they were careful to conceal at least their *congregational* meetings and worship. For which reason it was not possible that any commerce or settl'd correspondence by letters, or otherways, cou'd for many years be thought on betwixt the *Faithful* of distant nations, they being at that time not only utterly unknown to one another as to their persons, but as to their affairs.

Moreover the several Tracts (as I may call them) which compose the Gospel Canon were usually directed to the Faithful of some one town or province, (tho' probably intended for the general benefit of

of all the Faithful:) and these Tracts cou'd not at first be easily or soon communicated to other congregations, especially when far distant. However, the Original Writings were no doubt carefully preserv'd to be read and heard in their Religious Assemblies for the mutual comfort and instruction of all the members. And we may reasonably conceive that some copies of them were taken and procur'd by some of the more wealthy among them; for in those days the art of writing was not so common as it has been in these latter ages, and which in those early days was a profession or business, as Printing is among us, whereby men gain'd a livelihood and maintenance for themselves and families. To these *Original Writings and Authentick Copies* Tertullian seems to refer (*I. de Præscript. p. 82.*) where he says, *Thou that art desirous to employ thy more useful curiosity in the affair of thy salvation, go, visit the Apostolick Churches, where their own Authentick Letters are publickly read.*

It may be further observ'd, that in all places the *Primitive Believers* were under the greatest political discouragements, and expos'd

expos'd to continual persecutions. So that upon all these accounts it was next to impossible that the several writings of the Apostles and Evangelists shou'd in any short time be known to any one congregation, or consequently collected into one Canon : and it is presumptuous to require a miraculous interposition to convey supernaturally these Sacred Writings into one place, and authorise their reception. God does not favour mankind with such effects of his extraordinary power but upon some important necessity, or other occasion, for the manifestation of his glory, and for the essential good of men. Now here was plainly no necessity of having all those Sacred Records known in any one place in those early days ; for then they had the comfort of an Apostle's personal help and instruction, or that of their Disciples, or of the written instructions of some one of them ; which was then sufficient without the joint assistance of all the rest. Divine Providence seem'd more concern'd to give a miraculous success to the labors and preaching of the Apostles and of their Disciples, that by a happy multiplication of the Faithful in all Countries some initial

correspondence and communion might by degrees be begun among them, and by that means that they might communicate to one another the Holy Writings, and other important transactions preserv'd in their respective Congregations.

We have indeed no certain authority to conclude, that the Canonical Books of the New Testament were every where known and receiv'd till the beginning of the second Century ; at which time, the multitudes of Believers being every where surprizingly encreas'd, and by that means an easier correspondence between the Faithful of different Countries being practicable, it is very probable, that either the Authentic Writings, or Authentic Copies of them, were transmitted to some one more eminent Church, (perhaps, and most probably, to that of *Rome*, being the Capital of the Empire) and there carefully collected into one Volume, and thence communicated to all other Churches, as occasions offer'd. It is however certain, that the first Canon of the New Testament Writings must have been publickly known before the year 150. For we find them quoted and refer'd to  
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by *Justin Martyr* in his writings, (who liv'd at that time) and soon after him by *Irenæus of Lyons*, *Clemens of Alexandria*, *Tertullian in Africa*, *Origen*, &c. who were all almost cotemporaries. And 'tis this that constitutes a full evidence for the Authority of the Books of Scripture. For we can have no stronger proof of the genuineness of any book, than that men of learning, probity and disinterestedness, living near the time of the Author himself, quote it not as an obscure Treatise, but as a Writing publickly known and read, and receiv'd as the fundamental institution in religious doctrines and worship: Which is the very case of the Gospel Writers.

But it may be proper to insist something more at large on the Primitive Authors, upon whose authority we found the historical proof of the genuineness of the Canonical Books of the New Testament. *Justin Martyr* was, before his conversion, a *Platonic Philosopher*, as he himself confesses, (*Apol. I. p. 39.*) and by his works he manifestly appears to have been a man of great reading and study, and perfectly skill'd in all the Learning of the Pagan Mytho-

logy and Worship. This learned Martyr presented two Apologies in defence of the Christian Religion and of the primitive Believers; one to the Emperor *Antoninus Pius*, about the year 150; the other to *Antoninus the Philosopher*: in both which, as in his other works, undoubtedly his, he cites and transcribes many passages out of the old and New Scriptures, just as we read them now; which he cou'd not have done, if he had not had by him a collection of those Sacred Records: and consequently there can be no doubt but there must have been at that time some determinate Canon of the Sacred Writings set forth by the authority of the Church, or by publick consent. There were moreover several other learned Writers nearer up to the beginning of the second Century, who compos'd *Apologies* and other Tracts in Defence of the Christian Religion: but as now we have only the names of their works, or some small fragments of them preserv'd in *Eusebius*, and other ancient writers, I forbear to mention their authority, because they afford us no visible proof of the point now before us.

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We have moreover either cotemporary with, or immediately after *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus* at *Lyons* in *Gaul*, *Clemens Alex.* in *Egypt*, *Tertullian* in *Africa*, *Minucius Felix* at *Rome*, *Origen*, &c. all these authors eminent for their great learning, equal to the very Chiefs of the ancient Philosophers, whether *Greek* or *Latin*, some in philosophic, some in both philosophic and polite literature, especially if we take in some of those great men that liv'd not long after, as the great *Eusebius*, *Cyprian*, *Laetantius*, *Arnobius*, *Basil*, *Gregory Naz.* *Chrysostom*, &c. all these shining ornaments of the Christian name. And all these writers have likewise transcrib'd into their several Treatises an infinite variety of texts and references out of the books that compose the New Testament Canon: And many of these Authors being unknown to one another, this affords an irrefragable evidence, that the Gospel Canon was subsisting in their time almost as we now have it, and that it was publickly known and read in their distant regions. For otherwise, of what use cou'd their citations out of and references to those Books have been either

to the *Christians* or *Pagans*, if the said Books had been utterly unknown or not commonly to be met with? On the contrary we find by that most learned and elaborate Apology for the Christian Religion of *Origen* against *Celsus*, that even *Celsus* himself, a Pagan, and fierce adversary of the Christian Faith, was sufficiently acquainted with the Books of the New Testament. And having laid this foundation of the evidence for the genuineness of the Canonical Books of the New Testament, I need not take up any more of the Reader's time in carrying on this evidence thro' the following Centuries; the Names of the Authors in all nations and languages, who have founded their compositions on these Sacred Records being almost infinite: And therefore I will conclude from the instances here above alledg'd, that the evidence for the genuineness of the Books of the New Testament is as strong and convincing as can be requir'd, or as is possible in such a case.

It may not be unuseful to compare this evidence with the proofs we have of *Plato's* writings, or the *Æneids* of *Virgil*, as written by those celebrated Authors. And

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I am not afraid to affirm, that the evidence in behalf of the Scripture Canon is far more conclusive and convincing than that on which the whole credit of those others is founded: 1<sup>st</sup>, Because the subject of the Sacred Writings being of the highest concern to all men, it is of the greatest importance that they shou'd be fully satisfy'd of their authority: and 'tis for this reason that those writings have all along stood the strictest examination, and obtain'd the approbation of numberless Authors who in all ages and languages have distinguish'd themselves in the defence of the Christian doctrine. And this testimony cannot in any wise be conceiv'd in favour of the compositions of *Plato*, *Virgil*, or of any of the Classic Writers: For the little importance of such Treatises has never so sharpen'd the general curiosit of men as to enquire into the genuineness of them, who were little concern'd whether they were genuine or not. And there are many nations where the very names of such men are utterly unknown.

2<sup>dly</sup>, The Scriptures have been translated into all languages, whether learned

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or vulgar; and the copies of such translations are all found to agree in the purport of the original text, except a few variations of little consequence, and which are found in the several Copies of the Original Text itself. And this is likewise an argument which cannot be alledg'd for the Writings of any extra-scriptural Authors.

3<sup>dy</sup>, Great numbers of the Faithful have cheerfully laid down their lives, not only for the profession of the doctrines contain'd in the Sacred Records, but many to preserve the said Records from \* falling into the hands of heathen magistrates. And what greater authority can be offer'd in proof of any book? I need not touch upon a comparison of this with relation to the Claffics, &c.

To all this it may be objected; if the authority in behalf of the said Canonical Books be a point so clear, whence is it that none of the Heathen Writers, nor even *Josephus* himself, has once taken any notice of them? I answer: 1<sup>st</sup>, Supposing the truth of this observation, it can have

\* See Fleury Transl. tom. 1. l. 3. p. 524 & 568. & Optat. Milevit. l. 1.

no force as an objection; because it is well known that the Philosophers and Sophists of old made no account of those compositions which were not remarkable either for politeness of style, or for the proposition of some new system in Philosophy, or some new improvement of the old ones, and the like; whereas, tho' the Holy Scriptures have highly advanc'd the knowledge of man to the understanding of many hidden mysteries of God, have greatly perfected his moral and practical knowledge of his duty towards God and towards his neighbour in every condition of life; and above all, have enlarg'd our views beyond this frail and transitory life, by ascertaining to us an establish'd expectance and hope of eternal life and immortality; yet these divine illustrations of the mind are convey'd to us in so lowly and artless a dress, in so simple and unentertaining an expression, that it cannot seem strange if the wise and the learn'd, who rather sought for entertainment, and for new occasions to boast of their extensive learning, than real improvement in true knowledge and wisdom, despis'd and utterly disregarded the Sacred Writings

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as foolishness beneath their notice. Add to this, that during the three first Centuries, the *Christian Sect* was look'd upon as a despicable set of men under the severest discouragements of the Civil Government, and consequently the Sacred Records on which this *little Flock* was founded, cou'd not but share in the like contempt. But

2<sup>dly</sup>, The supposition upon which the objection is form'd is utterly false: For, as I have observ'd above, *Celsus* near the middle of the second Century had perus'd the Canonical Books, and had made a very ill use of them, by taking from thence an occasion to blaspheme and to calumniate the Divine Founder of our Faith, and to treat the Christian Profession with the utmost scorn and reproach; but he did not however treat the Sacred Records themselves either as fabulous or spurious. We likewise read in *Optatus Milevitanus*, and other historians, that the *Scriptures*, the *Sacred Books*, &c. were frequently demanded by Pagan Governors to be deliver'd to them. *Porphyry* also, another envenom'd Writer against the Christian Faith, was acquainted with the *Sacred*

Books towards the end of the third Century; and soon after him Julian the Apostate Emperor, who in all his writings and stratagems to overthrow the Faith of Christ, never utter'd the least suspicion that the Gospel Writings were the effect of forgery.

As for *Josephus* the Jewish historian, he cou'd not have been inform'd of the Sacred Records of the New Testament, because scarce any of them were written during his life, or at least so as to be publickly known: But as he is an Author of more than ordinary fame, and is remarkable for his silence with respect to the concerns of the Religion of Christ, it may not be unprofitable to clear a little this matter in this place, tho' it does not directly concern my present design. This silence therefore of *Josephus* is certainly worth our notice, but it does not bear the moment of an objection against the authority of our Christian Belief; for the reason of that silence is very obvious: for the disciples and followers of the crucify'd *Jesus* constantly publishing and confessing him to be the long expected *Messiah* of the Jews, and these as constantly expecting

pecting their *Messiah* to appear as a powerful Monarch and Conqueror of other nations, and upon this false prejudice having themselves been the *crucifyers* of their *Messiah* as acknowledg'd by the Christians; this so immovable and persevering a confession and acknowledgment of the *Christians*, so incens'd the *Jewish* Nation, that the *Jews* not only held the *Christians* in the lowest contempt, but omitted no means utterly to extirpate them: And therefore as they made no account of the *Christians* in their outward dealings, so neither were they worthy of their notice in their writings. But we may make use of *Josephus's* own answser against himself, which he made use of in a like case, (*i. e. contra Apion.* p. 1050. old edit.) *Hieronymus*, an eminent statesman in the time of *Antiochus Soter*, compil'd a history of *Alexander the Great*, of his successors the kings, and their posterity: and tho' this historian was educated in the neighbourhood of *Judea*, and tho' the *Jewish* affairs were very frequently interwoven with those of which *Hieronymus's* history consisted, this historian does not once vouchsafe to make mention of the name of the *Jews*; and

Josephus thus accounts for it, ὅποι φθόνοι τίνος, οὐδὲ ἄλλας αἰτίας οὐκ ὑγιεῖς, this Hieronymus did, says Josephus, (and we may say, this Josephus did) by reason of some envy conceiv'd against them, or for some other cause equally unjustifiable. See what Josephus says of the silence of Nicholas of Damascus concerning Herod's cruelties, &c. l. 16. *Antiq.* c. 11. and the silence of some historians in certain cases is well known to be no argument against the truth of facts mention'd by others.

Neither is Josephus utterly silent as to the Christian affairs: for besides that his history of Herod and of the Jews contemporary with Christ and his Apostles affords us a strong confirmation of the truth of the Gospel History, Josephus (l. 18. *Antiq.* c. 7.) makes a very respectful mention of John surnam'd the Baptist, and (l. 20. c. 8.) of James the Brother of Jesus who is called Christ. He speaks also of the unjust condemnation of John and James to death with a decent regard: And in particular in relation to James he takes notice that he was condemn'd to be ston'd for transgressing the laws, i.e. for blasphemy, and this cou'd be nothing else than

than preaching Christ. And these two passages of *Josephus* were never disputed. There is indeed a paragraph, l. 18. *Ant.* c. 4. concerning our Saviour Christ, which some Critics will not allow of as genuine. Their reasons are,

1<sup>st</sup>, The style of this passage varies from that of *Josephus*, and the passage breaks in upon the thread of his history. 2<sup>dly</sup>, and more to the purpose, *Josephus* seems in doubt whether he shou'd style Christ a man, and relates that *he appear'd alive the third day after his crucifixion, as was foretold by the Prophets concerning him.* 3<sup>dly</sup>, *Photius* in his *Bibliotheca* takes no notice of this passage: But in another place speaking of a Book *De Universo*, under *Josephus's* name, does not allow it to be his, because too honourable a mention is made therein of our Blessed Saviour: and accordingly, some time after he found the Author of it to be one *Caius* a Presbyter of *Rome*. 4<sup>thly</sup>, *Origen* and *Theodore*, two ancient writers, affirm that *Josephus* knew nothing of Christ. To all these objections I make this answer: To the

1<sup>st</sup>, The

1<sup>st</sup>, The variation of th<sup>e</sup> style and the seeming interruption of the history are but very weak criterions to determine the genuineness of paragraphs or texts in *Josephus*'s works. The style of an author will necessarily vary on different subjects, and there is hardly a history to be found where such interruptions as this objected may not be observ'd. And if this criticism on the above excepted passage be allow'd of, there may be many other paragraphs mark'd out in the works of *Josephus*, which may serve to abridge the bulk of his writings. And indeed the difference of style does not appear so very strong, nor the interruption so perceptible, that the paragraph may not very properly be adjudg'd to *Josephus*. To the

2<sup>d</sup>, I confess, it is not easy to conceive that *Josephus* wou'd insert such an account of our Saviour in his history, as a fact he himself was persuaded was truly such. But it cannot seem a wonder, that *Josephus* might relate the matter (however incredible, or difficult to him) as he had heard it publickly spoken of, and in support of the truth of which he cou'd not but know that many of the Faithful patiently

patiently suffer'd the implacable persecution of the Jews. There are many accounts of things and facts through the course of *Josephus's* history, which one cannot suppose *Josephus* himself was truly persuaded of the reality of them. And it is well known that many relations in the books of history compos'd by men of the first reputation, are founded on general reports. To the

3<sup>d</sup>. Perhaps in the Copy of *Josephus* which *Photius* had before him, that paragraph concerning our Saviour was wanting. However this be, the abridgment which *Photius* gives of *Josephus's* book of *Antiquities* seems very different from his abstract of his volume of the *Jewish Wars*, and of other Authors in many of the first volumes of his *Bibliotheca*. For in these he gives a very summary account of what is remarkable in them without adding any thing of his own: whereas in his abridgment of the books of *Antiquities* he adds some facts which are not in *Josephus*. Thus to *John Baptist* he gives the character of *Præcursor*, which is not in *Josephus*. He also inserts the *Birth* of our Blessed Saviour, the *Massacre of the Infants*

fants by Herod, the beheading of James the Brother of John, by Herod Agrippa, and that this Herod intended to kill Peter also to gratify the Jews, not one word of all which is to be found in Josephus, as we read him. See Phot. Biblioth. cod. 238. p. 965—968. and p. 974—978. As to the false Josephus, or Caius a Roman Presbyter, his judgment is very just, and the imposture or mistake is easily discernible: (it does not appear that Caius publish'd his work under the name of Josephus, but without a name; which work, on account of the resemblance of its style to that of Josephus, was by some ascrib'd to Josephus.) Photius's remark on that work is in these words, Cod. 48. p. 35. " He speaks very properly of Christ as the true God, and gives him the proper name of Christ. He very accurately describes his ineffable generation of the Father: And this perhaps may give some men an occasion to doubt whether this work be of Josephus." To the

4<sup>th</sup>, I answer, that that affirmation of Origen and Theodoret cannot be altogether true; for in his relation concerning St.

James; he calls him the *Brother of Jesus, who is called Christ*, which implies some knowledge at least of Christ. It is certainly much more likely that *Josephus* might have had some general account of our Saviour Christ, tho' a prejudic'd one, than of St. *John Baptist* and of St. *James*, who were obscure persons in comparison of our Blessed Lord Christ. It seems therefore probable that *Origen* and *Theodoret* intended no more, than that *Josephus*, who was born after our Saviour's crucifixion, had no true and particular knowledge of Christ, and of his doctrines and miracles. In fine, this famous paragraph of *Josephus* (render'd so by the Criticks) is found in all the \* Copies and Manuscripts of him that are now extant; it is expressly cited word for word by † *Eusebius* about two hundred years after him, (and above five hundred years before *Photius*) and after *Eusebius* by *Jerom*; by which it appears to be very ancient, and not easily to be rejected as spurious. The custom indeed that was set up by some ancient writers to compose tracts and books under the

\* Du Pin Eccles. Hist. tom. I. p. 24.

† Hist. l. I. c. 10.

names of Authors of great reputation, to add the greater weight to particular doctrines espous'd by those writers, and of inserting into, or erasing out of the text of celebrated Authors, certain passages that might gain authority to those doctrines, and discountenance the opposite tenets, has been of great disservice both to history and to the doctrine of faith ; and gave a just cause to the modern Criticism, (very useful when confin'd within proper bounds) but has moreover been attended with this fatal consequence, that Scepticism and a general doubt concerning religion is thereby too deeply rooted amongst us. It wou'd be very happy if Sceptics wou'd abate of their rigour in insisting on clearer evidences for the truth of reveal'd doctrines and of facts relating to them, than such subjects are capable of. In the present case, some charge the Jews with erasing out of *Josephus* the above controverted passage in those Copies where it might not have been found : Others accuse the Christians of inserting it into those Copies where it is to be read.

2<sup>dly</sup>, I answer to the question above propos'd concerning the veracity of the

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New Testament Writers, or concerning the truth of the several facts contain'd in the Gospels, &c. as relating to our Bleſſed Saviour's Birth, &c. That the evidence of this particular is as strong as is poſſible, and this, whether we conſider it with relation to the Sacred Writings themſelves, or to the constant attēſtation that was powerfully given them. As concerning the inspir'd Penmen, or their Writings themſelves; their manner of expreſſion and method of conveying the ſeveral facts to us therein mention'd is plain and ſimple, without affectation or exaggeration, free from borrow'd flowers and ornaments of composition in uſe with Authors that chiefly ſeek to please and entertain their Readers, and to make boſt of their learning and much knowledge: On the contrary, the Holy Writers principal aim appears plainly to have been, to give a clear and naked relation of impoſtant things done for the universal benefit of mankind, and for the neceſſary inſtruction and ſalvation of all men. And conſequently those Holy Men cou'd have no meer worldly deſign in view in tranſmitting to us their Narratives. Further,

the facts as by them related, how extraordinary soever some of them may seem, are highly consonant to reason, and therefore as to themselves credible ; and the persons treated of are every where represented as worthy of their characters : and in general, the whole history, tho' form'd by several hands, is every where consistent with itself without any real variation, much less without opposition. And this is a point of considerable moment, that many different persons, at different times, and, some of them at least, without the knowledge or perusal of the others works, shou'd commit the very same thread or system of an history to writing, that they shou'd all write almost the very same thing in different expressions, without almost any variation, excepting in the me-

\**And this is a strong proof, that they did not copy one after another.* thod and series of facts \*, and the addition of some circumstance omitted (not contradicted or differently related) by the others. How strong an argument this is of their being divinely assisted and inspir'd in this matter may easily appear from the too notorious opposition and contradiction of prophane writers, where they are engag'd in a narration of the same

same events, which is well known, and renders profane history in many cases very uncertain and perplex'd.

As concerning the uninterrupted powerful attestation inseparable from the Gospel, it is well known, and it will be superfluous to enlarge upon it. As to those things that are related both by the sacred and profane writers, we have the concurring testimony of these that the others relations are true, and by that we may conclude, that the sacred Writers are as faithful in their description of those facts wherein profane Writers have no part. But of this particular we have the irrefragable testimony of an uninterrupted (as I may term it) succession of divine wonders and miracles during the first three hundred years, and which was so powerful and amazing an evidence, that infinite numbers of men of all ranks and conditions freely expos'd themselves to the most ignominious, painful and cruel kinds of death in defence of the truth of those facts. Imagine if you can a stronger evidence than this of the truth of any distant fact.

But perhaps some will say, how are we sure that there were any miracles

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wrought at all, or that those that seem'd to be such were in truth any more than delusive appearances? To this I answer, 1<sup>st</sup>, Our Blessed Lord, *Jo. xiv. 12.* promis'd to his Disciples, *He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall be done also, and greater works than these shall be done:* and *Mark xvi. 17, 18.* *And these signs shall follow them that believe, in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* And indeed unless this Divine Power had so constantly attended the Apostles and their followers for a considerable term of years, how cou'd it have been possible for twelve illiterate despisable men, destitute even of the common necessaries of life, unarm'd and unassisted, preaching and recommending nothing else but a contempt of temporal honours, riches, and the forsaking all unlawful pleasures, constantly and boldly inveighing against all idol-worship as vain, absurd and impious, and against all the rites and ceremonies of religion every where in force throughout the world; I say, unless the *Divine*

Divine Power had most manifestly declar'd itself on their behalf, how is it possible so small a company; and of such men under such discouraging circumstances, shou'd have ever gain'd any attention to their preaching, shou'd have drawn after them any number of Proselytes, shou'd have been able to form religious assemblies, shou'd have been capable of setting themselves up in opposition to the universal civil power the establish'd protector of the Pagan Religion, shou'd have been able to combat the ancient Academies and schools, the seats and original fountains of learning and polite knowledge in all arts and sciences; in a word, shou'd by degrees by an immovable perseverance, and by wading thro' difficulties and continual struggles rais'd by the whole combin'd power of men, have at last obtain'd a complete victory and triumph over the doctrine, the learning, the religion and power of the heathen world? If any one can imagine an undertaking and a success of this nature practicable either by chance or by the sole power of man, let him show a parallel case that ever was so brought about, or let him conceive a

scheme how such an adventure may be brought about; or if he cannot, let him desist from all opposition against so manifest a Divine Power which has so visibly and stupendously distinguish'd itself for the protection, propagation, and establishment of the Christian Religion, and by such incontestable divine tokens has evidently declar'd it to be the sole work of God himself.

2<sup>dly</sup>, I answer, That it is not possible that men of the most refin'd abilities and learning cou'd be impos'd upon by delusive appearances of false miracles and lying wonders, such as *Justin Martyr* a Platonic Philosopher, eminent for his extensive learning, who very early embrac'd the Faith of Christ, underwent great sufferings in maintenance of it, undertook to publish his writings in defence of it, even in *Rome* itself, addressing them to the *Emperor* and *Senate* in whom was vested the whole power of the world, and confirm'd the confession of his faith in his old age with the sacrifice of his life: such as *Cyprian*, *Arnobius*, *Minucius Felix*, *Tertullian*, and numberless others, who from rigid and learned Pagans became most

most zealous assertors of the doctrine of Christ; and in their writings frequently take notice of the miracles and wonders, which were so many authentic seals and confirmations given from above of the truth of the Religion of Christ; and what was the consequence of these mens enlisting themselves under the standard of Christ? They immediately forfeited and bid adieu to all the advantages and comforts of the civil protection and society; they from thence laid themselves open to continual vexations and persecutions, they became expos'd to daily apprehensions of being dragg'd before Tribunals and Magistrates; and great numbers of them underwent the suffering of tortures and most cruel executions. Is it possible men of experience in the world, men of learning habituated to nice and curious observations in the study of nature and religion, shou'd be drawn in by the meer slight and juggling tricks of men to renounce all the interests and comforts of life, and in lieu of these, voluntarily, nay chearfully, to bring on themselves the ruin of their temporal concerns, the arbitrary prosecutions with the malignant enmity of their

neighbours, and the unavoidable sentence of banishment from their country, their friends, and all that could be dear to them, or of death, and frequently of both?

Lastly, There is not one Christian Apologist, or primitive Writer of the first ages of the Church, who is not very clear and positive in this argument of frequent miracles being wrought by the Faithful in confirmation of the Christian Doctrine: Many of these Apologists and Writers were themselves eye-witnesses of (and probably themselves also workers of) miracles; many they receiv'd by the unsuspected testimony of others, and above all, such an amazing increase and progress of such a doctrine deliver'd by so diminutive a sett of men, so few in number, and utterly void of all human helps, and in direct opposition to the whole complicated force of human power, is itself an incontestable (I was upon the point of saying, a demonstrative) argument, that this great thing cou'd not have been effected but by a lasting series of signs and wonders from above, to give a divine sanction to it. Thus in conclusion we have

have not only the external testimony of numberless Authors in proof of the truth of the primitive Miracles wrought in the behalf of the propagation of the doctrine of Christ, but we have the very plain effect of them, *viz.* the establishment of that doctrine throughout the world, and the utter extirpation of the heathen Theology and Religion, which is a testimony as strong at least, as if we ourselves had been spectators of those miracles. And now from the allegations I have offer'd thro' the context of this chapter in vindication of the genuineness of the Canonical Books of the New Testament, and of the truth of the several facts therein deliver'd concerning the *Birth, &c.* of our Blessed Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, the true *Messiah* as foretold in the ancient Scriptures, I will conclude with a firm assurance, that our Christian Belief, and the most holy Religion we have embrac'd is founded on such solid, so incontestable, and such infallible arguments, reasons and testimonies, as will stand the tryal of the most nice and critical, even of the most captious scrutiny; so that no sour and corrupt leaven, no base mixture of he-

refy, superstition, imposture or lying wonders can weaken or deprecate, no malignant counsel or contrivance of men, however combin'd together, even the whole *power of hell* can never prevail against a *Faith founded on such a Rock.*

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### The Conclusion.

HAVING now brought the arguments of the foregoing sheets to the point for which Divine Providence design'd them, by collecting many scatter'd evidences to center in the *Person and Character of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, I will, for the benefit of the Reader, wind up the whole thread of those arguments into one bottom or summary view, that the united force of them contracted into a few lines or paragraphs, may leave a stronger impression on his mind. The

1<sup>st</sup> Argument, which is the foundation Chap. II. of Truth and of Religion in general, demonstrates, that there is but *One Being necessary of itself*, or which cannot be conceiv'd not to be: That this *Being* is consequently *self-existent* or exists of itself, i. e. is not caus'd or produc'd by any other: That it is likewise *infinite* in all

kinds of perfection; because there is not any thing that can set any bounds to its existence or perfections: That no other Being whatever, whether this be Matter, or its various Mixtures, Compounds, &c, can be so *necessary of itself*; because it may be conceiv'd not to have been; and because, if it were *necessary of itself*, it wou'd, and must consequently be for that very reason *self-existent, infinite* in all kinds of perfection, &c. which evidently it is not. The necessary consequence of all which is, that the *whole System of Nature, the whole Frame of the Universe, every integrant part of them, how small or great soever,* is the pure effect of that *One Necessary, Infinite, Self-existent Being*, which we distinguish by the most sacred name of God. The

Chap. III. 2<sup>d</sup> Argument deduces from hence, That, as the creation and formation of the Universe is the sole *work of God*, that description of it, which we read in the first chapter of *Genesij* deliver'd by *Moses*, is perfectly conformable to the principles of reason, having these three evident characters of the truth of it; That it corresponds to the time and order of the duration

ration of things, That the ancient appellations of the several countries, rivers, cities, generations, &c. of the world, are the same with those we find in the Book of *Genesis*: And again, That the first propagation of Mankind, the imperfect beginnings of *Families, Societies, Government of Men*, and of Arts in general, are perfectly suited to the condition of the first Parents of Mankind as describ'd by *Moses*; and consequently, that these three so plain characters of truth, viz. *Chronology, Chorography*, and the *first peopling of the Earth*, almost irresistibly challenge our assent to and belief of this part at least of *Moses's Writings*, especially if we will observe, that no other Writer whatever has ever attempted to give any distinct and rational account of the Origin of the World or of our Species. And we may further very rationally conclude from hence, that the Writings of *Moses* deserve our earnest attention to all the other matters therein contain'd; since at our very first entrance upon them we discover therein such strong characters of truth and sincerity, and such a depth of knowledge of the mysteries of Nature, not to be met with in any other Writer,

3<sup>dly</sup>, From these natural and fundamental truths, we advance further to enquire, whether God cou'd not impart to men some more distinct and express knowledge of his Divine Nature and perfections, and of those things God requires of men to do in obedience to his Divine Majesty, and to render themselves pleasing in his sight; I say, whether God cou'd not impart to men such a more perfect reveal'd knowledge, than they themselves purely by the strength of their own faculties were able to attain to; and whether such a knowledge so reveal'd wou'd not be highly beneficial to frail man, and altogether worthy of the Divine Benignity? And the affirmative to this is evident to demonstration. For the mind of man is evidently improvable in knowledge from his infant state till his faculties are worn and wasted away by age or fickness: Man is continually learning, whether he will or no, from his cradle to the last glimmerings of life; his teachers, his conversation with men, his studies, continually instill into him new and further degrees of knowledge; and has not God, who *knows the clay whereof we are made*, and the

the capaciousness of his own work, reserv'd to himself a power of communicating to the mind of man some more excellent kinds of knowledge either with regard to his own Divine Nature, or more enlivening degrees even of that knowledge which may be acquir'd by man's own industry and labour, than human teachers are capable of? Surely this is so far from being impossible, that 'tis impossible to be otherwise.

And in fact, this was not only possible, but absolutely necessary, and mankind wou'd have utterly perish'd without a most gracious Divine Revelation. For look into profane history, as well as into the Books of *Moses*, and you will read and observe the most gross and absurd, the most impious deviation from the true knowledge of God and of his Divine Will in men that trusted too much to the strength of their own faculties. We there read that the light of nature was not only darken'd in them, but was become utterly eclips'd and lost; so that at length men neither knew God their Maker, nor consequently what was his Divine Will and Precepts, in order to render him the proper

proper tribute of obedience. And here it was that the Divine Goodness and Mercy stupendously display'd itself worthily of so excellent a Being in favour of his blind degenerated creature man. He first in lesser degrees vouchsafes to reveal some manifestations of himself to chosen favourites ; these manifestations he further extends and improves according to the time and circumstances of things, in such a manner as to form a lasting series of reveal'd notices, which by degrees might constitute among a determinate people a system of a continu'd Divine Providence proving and publishing to men a fix'd and certain purpose in God to send in the *Eph. i. 10.* fulness of, or at an appointed time, a Divine Messenger from his own right hand, to plant among men the true knowledge of God and of virtue and morality, and of the true, perfect and acceptable worship of God ; I say, to plant this Divine Knowledge among men by his Divine Example, by his Doctrine and Precepts, and by the irresistible Power of his Miracles. All these particulars are deliver'd in the Holy Scriptures with great plainness and strong credibility, together with sundry events

events foretold by the above-mention'd favourites of God, as *Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, &c.* and the accomplishment of their predictions is a manifest token that the Holy Spirit of God spoke by them.

4<sup>thly</sup>, The true reveal'd knowledge of God and of his Divine Will, and the true manner of worship acceptable to him being contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, it is necessary to obviate some exceptions that might be made against them, and in particular to the abrupt, obscure ænigmatical style and manner of expression observable in them. And to this it is answer'd, that the Divine revelation, as express'd in that form of words which is peculiar to those Sacred Records, is most wisely adapted to the genius of that people to whom it was communicated, and to the subject itself.

1<sup>st</sup>, As to the genius or forms of speech peculiar to the Eastern Nations: Their discourses in their primitive times, whether in writing or by word of mouth, especially on religious and doctrinal subjects, did not consist of, did not run on in a clear connected thread of composi-

tion according to our present improv'd method of speech: their sentences and periods were generally on such occasions abrupt and broken from one another, not interwoven and connected into one context of reasoning; but rather were utter'd as they occur'd without any particular regard to order or connection: the Easterns moreover were wont to enliven their discourses with frequent allusions, parables, and other figurative and obscure phrases and sententious sayings, in order to create in their hearers or readers a more earnest attention to and consideration of what was deliver'd to them in such discourses. The Holy Scriptures therefore being to be heard or read by such a generation of men, were to be properly suited to their genius, and to their customary way of receiving such kinds of instructions, *viz.* by being deliver'd in a broken and abrupt style, and without any stiff confinement to that order and connection of discourse, which in after-ages might be introduc'd amongst men by art and ingenuity.

2<sup>dly</sup>, In relation to the particular subject of the inspir'd Writings, a more useful and instructing manner of style cannot be

be conceiv'd, than that which is found in the Holy Scriptures: for whatever concerns instruction or precept necessary to all men, is express'd in so plain and intelligible a form of words, as is suited to the meanest capacities: those doctrines that are design'd rather to enrich the mind with more sublime ideas and notions of the Nature and Attributes of God, and of the Divine Oeconomy, are conceiv'd in more lofty and hidden strains, to awaken the attention of those who have capacity and leisure to employ their thoughts in the meditation on more profound and improving subjects: and again, those passages of the Divine Inspiration which are purely *prophetical*, intended as arguments of the Divine *Prescience* and *Disposition* of future things, to raise and keep up the hope and expectation of God's People, that they are inseparably under his providential care, that excellent advantages and blessings are promis'd and laid up in store for them, and that when these are accomplish'd, they are the pure effects of his Divine Goodness towards them, these important *truths* are deliver'd in such mysterious figurative allusions and de-

A a scriptions,

scriptions, that at the present time of their delivery, little more can be apprehended by them, than the expectation of some *great good* Divine Providence intends for them, the full purport of which cannot be attain'd, till the fulfilling of the Prediction. This is an observation on the inspir'd Writings so just, and so obvious, and so rationally vindicates and justifies the wise conduct of the Divine Spirit with regard to the sacred style and expression, that to raise any exceptions against the Holy Scriptures on account of their abruptness and obscurity, betrays a malevolent spirit, such as that of *Celsus, Porphyry,* and other enemies of Divine Revelation, or a very superficial knowledge of them.

It was further necessary on this occasion to furnish the Reader with the most unquestionable and convincing proofs of the genuineness and veracity of the sacred books of the Bible, which we have the inestimable blessing to be so commonly read amongst us: and of this particular we have the strongest motives of credibility that are possible. For we have a constant uninterrupted tradition of those

Sacred

Sacred Records: we have a lasting continu'd series of facts corresponding to them: we have a long succession of Miracles, and a manifold completion of Prophecies in proof of them: we have an uninterrupted observance, upwards of two thousand years, of customs, statutes and laws both numerous and burdensome; an observance, I say, by a strange stiff-neck'd perverse People, that cannot possibly be conceiv'd to have submitted to them, or to have continu'd in that submission but through manifest visible demonstrations of a Divine Power that first gave the sanction to those laws, and after continu'd to confirm that sanction by a frequent repetition of the like signs and wonders. Neither was this stubborn race of men obedient to their fore-mention'd customs and laws, as the laws of other nations are receiv'd by their respective subjects; the *Jews* very frequently, when press'd to it, freely expos'd their lives and fortunes to extreme hazards in defence of them, and of the very Book of Laws itself; and on many occasions underwent the rage and fury of impious tyrants, and sacrific'd even their lives, rather than to

renounce their profession and obedience to those Divine Laws, or surrender to their enemies the Sacred Volumes in which their laws were written. And this their religious zeal continues in some sort even in their posterity to this very day, whereof we ourselves are witnesses.

As concerning the genuineness of the Sacred Volumes in particular, they come handed down to us in so direct and indisputable a tradition from the time of \**Ezra*, by the care of the Jewish Church, being almost from his time constantly read in their *Synagogues* or Religious Assemblies, (and before that time during their successive government under *Judges and Kings*, their Tabernacle and Temple-Worship, and their political establishment were but the outward expression and practice of those things that were written in the Books of *Moses*) that we must either reject all historical accounts of things done in past ages, or we must acknowledge those Divine Records to be truly such as they have uninterruptedly been receiv'd to be; there being not one book or writing either of

\* Above five hundred years before Christ.

history, or of any other kind, that can claim any distant competition for genuineness with the Holy Scriptures. And to consider their veracity ; the succession of time, the concurrent order and completion of events, the consistency between the several Holy Writers, the foreign Testimony of States and Kingdoms exactly corresponding to the relations and accounts therein deliver'd, are such coercive arguments of the veracity of the Holy Scriptures, that I cannot conceive how a stronger attestation or evidence of the genuineness and veracity of any Book can be offer'd or requir'd, than this now before us, or that so faithful, so true, and so consistent an History of facts and events, that so pure, so untainted and regular a disposition and system of such sublime doctrines could be carry'd throughout without any the least variation or contrariety, but by the immediate care, direction, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. More especially when we may justly observe the great want of fidelity, the great partiality, the many mistakes, gross errors, and numberless contradictions we every where meet with in all other

Books of history and doctrinal compositions, which usually perplex and give trouble to the studious Readers of them. From the veracity and authority of the Holy Scriptures thus founded and evinc'd upon such solid and unquestionable arguments, it naturally follows that we consider in the

Chap. vi.

5<sup>th</sup> place, That the *Wisdom* of God plainly intended so lasting and uninterrupted a chain of divine Providence and direction of reveal'd truths for some very important determinate event, for the manifestation of his divine power, goodness, and mercy towards Mankind to whom such signal favours had been vouchsaf'd. And whoever will take serious pains to study the Holy Scriptures with earnest attention, and to observe the various dispositions of the divine counsels, and the order and gradual unfolding of the mysterious Roll of divine Revelation, cannot but clearly discern a continu'd disposition running thro' the whole of them, and leading us to this one blessed event, namely, the *appearance of some most excellent divine Messenger*, whom God design'd to send into the world for the good and happiness of all,

all. This subject is particularly treated of in the sixth chapter of this Book, and the whole thread of prophecy from the beginning of the world and of the divine dispositions is evidently drawn out to its full length as terminating in our Blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ. On this occasion also I have endeavour'd to precaution the Reader against an error, fatal indeed to the *Jews*, and which has also misled some modern enemies of the Gospel to form groundless Objections against the divine Person of Christ. And my observation for this purpose is this: that the Antient Scriptures have describ'd the *Messiah* under two different characters, *viz.* the *one*, wherein he was first to appear on earth in a *low, poor, humble* condition of life, subject to pain, scorn, and suffering, and subject to the civil Powers, at which appearance he was to preach and promulge a new doctrine of Salvation, which was to be in common to all Men and not to the *Jews* only, tho' they were to be favour'd with the first delivery of it; to found and establish among men a new divine Law and Covenant, whereby the *Old Mosaick insufficient* one was by de-

*Gal. iv. 9.  
Heb. ix. 9.*

grees to become utterly abolish'd; and after the full and powerful Sanction given to this so divine a work by his example of a most heavenly and unspotted life, and by various signs and indisputable miraculous operations, to offer himself up a divine sacrifice and oblation by his death on the Cross for the sins and iniquities of all Mankind.

The *other* character of the Messiah, as sometimes describ'd in the former Scriptures, is that of a most glorious King and Conqueror, which he will assume at his second appearance on earth; when he will utterly subdue all the remains of his enemies, and reign over all Nations and Kingdoms as sole Monarch of the World. The *former* of these characters has long ago been executed and accomplish'd beyond all contradiction. The Prophecies concerning the *latter* remain in the same state they were in when first deliver'd, but in full assurance that their future completion is as certain, as of those already fulfill'd. Even the present stubborn infidelity of the *Jews* seems to be a strong argument of this great truth. Their rejection of and disobedience to Christ their true

true (tho' unacknowledg'd) Messiah, fill'd *Mat. xxiii.* up the measure of their guilt and of God's <sup>32, 34,</sup> *35, 36.* wrath against them: so that they are at present under the severe chastisement of *Rom. xi.* the divine judgments foretold to them; but they are not absolutely cut off from the divine care and protection. Tho' they are now suffering the heavy vengeance of God according to their own Prophecies, yet they have also many most gracious predictions in their favour to be accomplish'd. And their continuing a separate generation of men, unmix'd with the rest of Mankind, and in a firm expectation of a final deliverance from their so lasting a captivity, and from all their calamities, seems to afford no inconsiderable argument of that illustrious *Epoch, Lu. xxi.* when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be <sup>24.</sup> come in, or when the greatest part of the *Ro. xi. 25.* Gentile world shall have embrac'd the Gospel of Christ, that then also the Jews will universally join with them in the acknowledgment of Christ their Messiah and in the belief of the Gospel; and then finally will our divine Captain, and *Bishop, and Pastor* of our Souls appear a second time to receive the homage and

obedience of all men, to restore peace and happiness to the Jews, and exercise an unbounded sway and dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth.

Ch. vii.

6<sup>thly</sup>, Left the foregoing general survey on the divine reveal'd counsels and dispositions might appear a mere arbitrary conjectural notion, it was necessary by way of a specimen, to examin and explain more minutely some of the above collected Prophecies, and to demonstrate that they were literally fulfill'd in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him only ; which with les trouble might be done in relation to many other Prophecies also. And thus the whole chain and connection of the divine Oeconomy concerning the Messiah or that most divine Person that was to be a *blessing to all Nations* being drawn out from near the beginning of all God's works to its full length and period, it now only remains to give the last Seal or Sanction to our firm assurance of the truth of this so divine an event, by many concurring arguments in proof of the genuineness and veracity of the Gospel-history concerning the Birth, Life, Doctrines, Precepts, Miracles,

Ch. viii.

rales, Sufferings, Death, and Resurrection, of our blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ. And this whole subject or these aggregate facts of history are founded on the strongest evidence possible. For

1<sup>t</sup>, Touching the new Scriptures or the Gospel-writings themselves; we have an uninterrupted, uncontradicted consent and mention of them from their first appearance (and almost from the time they were written) of numberless Authors eminent for their great learning and authority, for their unsuspected faith and veracity, for their great integrity and holiness of life, and above all for their venerable constancy in cheerfully suffering all manner of vexatious prosecutions, cruel torments, and even death it self for the profession and defence of those divine doctrines and facts that are contain'd in those inspir'd Writings: Those writings have moreover (especially in the primitive times) pass'd through the most inquisitive and scrupulous examination and scrutiny of men of the greatest abilities and discernment and have been receiv'd and reverenc'd by them as the Oracles of God; in a word, those sacred Records of Christianity

Christianity have been translated into all the learned and vulgar Tongues from the river *Eupbrates* to the utmost bounds of our *European* quarter of the world ; and every one of those copies exactly agree with one another in the expression and purport of the same doctrines and facts without any the least variation ; and the great respect and pious care where-with they have been always treated by the Faithful, even to the suffering of torments and death to prevent their falling into the hands of profane Scoffers and Magistrates, I say, all this is sufficient to form a demonstrative proof of the divine authority of the Gospel-writings, and that the sacred Records which are now read in our Churches are the very same with those that were first heard and read by the Primitive Christians.

2<sup>dly</sup>, To consider the doctrines and facts themselves ; nothing can be more certain, nothing more evident, than the divine truth and power of them. They were preach'd and promulg'd only by a few poor, necessitous, illiterate, despicable, helpless men in opposition to human passions and lusts, in contempt of worldly glory,

glory, riches and gaiety of life, and this without the least mention of any present hope or advantage as of this life; they were intended by these mean Preachers to work in men a thorough contempt and abhorrence of all the religious establishments (among the heathens) then under the superstitious and avow'd protection and support of the whole temporal Power of the World, and in some sort of the devils themselves; nay, these very doctrines and these Teachers were to enter the Lists with the Academies and Schools of *Greece* and *Rome*, those famous nurseries of all kinds of literature: And yet notwithstanding, this seemingly vain attempt, these hopeless doctrines struck an immediate firm root in the minds of men, and thereon ensu'd a speedy and astonishing multiplication of Believers; and in little more than three Centuries their absolute prevailing over the boasted learning of the heathen World, over the whole power of Dæmons and foul seducing Spirits, and over the whole idolatrous worship of the gentile World, is such a glaring, such an irresistible evidence, that those doctrines are the particular

cular inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, and those facts the immediate works of God himself, that it can leave no room for any ballance in a sober mind.

I need not proceed to take notice of the numberless miracles and other divine attestations given from above to render such frail instruments of the divine decrees powerful enough to carry on such a divine work to its fullest stretch of accomplishment: The wonderful success and the event it self is a full demonstration. Lastly, infinite numbers of men of all states and conditions of life in every Nation for the sake of their immovable adherence to the belief and confession of those reveal'd doctrines have voluntarily and with more than manly ardour expos'd themselves to banishment and to the loss of their temporal goods and of all that is dear and comfortable in life, to be mew'd up in noisome and loathsome dungeons, and to most wracking torments and a shameful death.

Is it possible to imagine that among such multitudes of *Martyrs* and *Confessors* all shou'd be stupid, senseless, credulous Bigots? That among such numbers of learned

learned men of age and experience in the world, all shou'd be so void of discernment and penetration, as to sacrifice their honours, their interests, their families, their comforts in life, even life itself, for the sake of an idle tale, a religious imposture without any solid foundation to support it? Is it possible such a contagion or mode of religious credulity shou'd every where seize on all orders and degrees of men one century after another to the utter ruin of their temporal concerns; nay, that in the space of four hundred years this spirit of credulity shou'd become so epidemical as to get an absolute possession of the *Greek* and *Roman* Schools and Academies, shou'd command an eternal silence to the most celebrated Oracles of seducing Spirits, shou'd overthrow the Temples and idolatrous Buildings dedicated to imaginary and false Gods, shou'd extirpate almost the very remains of the heathen Theology and Worship, in a word shou'd become the only lawful, popular and establish'd Religion throughout the world, and all this notwithstanding, that this so surprizing and triumphant a success shou'd be founded on

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mere credulity without one word of real truth in the facts receiv'd and believ'd, without one real divine testimony or miracle wrought to favour such a wonderful progress of a mere groundless story?

On the contrary, I am not afraid absolutely to conclude from hence, that the incontestable arguments for the genuineness and veracity of the ancient Scriptures, the many foregoing Prophecies recorded in them concerning our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ so minutely and literally fulfill'd in him, and in him only, such irrefragable testimonies for the genuineness and veracity of the Gospel-writings, such an amazing, such a miraculous progress and settlement of such a constitution of doctrines upon the ruins of both the learning and power of heathenism, and that by Instruments or Teachers as mere men, contemptible, the very *dross* and *scum* of their species, I say I am bold to conclude, that such a joint force of arguments that never have deceiv'd, that never can deceive, is in no degree of certainty or evidence, when fairly and impartially consider'd, inferior to the strictest demonstration: and consequently that the

*1 Cor. iv.  
13.*

truth

truth of the Christian Religion as founded on this evidence is propounded to us in the strongest and the clearest light we can possibly require.

### Postscript.

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## Postscript.

*Concerning a late irreverent and  
most unbecoming manner of treat-  
ing religious subjects in the style  
of Ridicule.*

I Confess it gives me real concern and trouble of mind, when I reflect that I live in an Age, wherein the invaluable blessing of *Liberty*, so excellently indulg'd by our happy State, is prostituted to the great dishonour of God, to the contempt of his most Holy Religion and Worship, and to the grievous offence of all sober minded men. I conceive, that the privilege of liberty of speech and of writing is not allow'd for the encouraging or patronizing any evil purposes either in Religion or the State or for the corruption or depravation of manners. I observe, in the two Great Sanctuaries of

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our happy Constitution, where the liberty of speech is stretched to its farthest bounds, there are certain limits of decorum and order prescrib'd, which no one is allow'd to exceed with impunity. And unless this Rule is preserv'd through the whole State, it will be impossible for it to continue long in a state of a regular subordination and tranquillity.

We of this best constituted Monarchy seem to be indulg'd in the liberty of canvassing and reasoning upon all affairs of publick concern, even upon *Acts* of *Parliament* themselves, how far they may appear beneficial or hurtful to the subject and the common-wealth ; but the licence of reflecting dishonourably on the Authors of those *Acts*, or of rendering them contemptible to the People is wisely prohibited, and when insolently practis'd, is and ought to be suitably animadverted upon. I think there is much more reason to proceed in this manner with regard to *Religion*. *Religion* indeed is a matter wherein every *Private Person* is his own judge ; because he is to profess and practise it according to his own judgment ; for he cannot be truly religious by ano-

ther man's Religion; this must be his own. And therefore I think an ample toleration in religious matters ought to be allow'd in every State. But as it is necessary that in every State some national constitution of religious doctrines and worship shou'd be establish'd (and these I should desire to be very plain and simple, and, as reveal'd, to stand clear of all mere human appointments of religious terms and doctrines) so all subjects ought to be indulg'd the free power of examining and weighing the merits and grounds of such doctrines and of such a worship, and of freely expressing and publishing their doubts and their reasons against the said doctrines and religious worship.

This is a Point so clear to me, that I propose it as a *Postulatum*, or as a *first Principle*. But then I lay it down as another *Postulatum*, that as *Religion* is of the greatest importance and seriousness, as purely concerning God and his Divine Rule over us, so whatever relates to *Religion* ought to be treated with great reverence and sobriety, and with a plain intention (in the case of controversy) to discern the truth of it, and that only.  
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And as the *Civil Power* in all wisdom is engag'd to prevent or to punish all disrespectful and contemptuous treatment of the Government it self, or of the Rulers by just and seasonable Chastisements, so is the *Civil Magistrate*, who is *God's Vice-gerent* on Earth, rather more oblig'd to prevent and to punish all insults upon God, and upon his Holy Religion, especially as being embrac'd by the State of which he is appointed Governor.

I hope no one can complain of this, as calling in the *Brachium Sæculare*, or the Arms of the Temporal Power in defence of Religion. If it stood in need of such arms as these, the arguments in proof of it, would be of little weight. I am therefore so far from calling in such an *Aid*, that I desire no other privilege of speech, or of writing in behalf of Religion, than that I wou'd desire every Free-thinker or other Adversary to have of speaking or writing against it. There are certain laws peculiar to all kinds of Combats and Combatants, Games, &c. which none are allow'd to transgres without some check or penalty. In the present con-

troversy between the Professors of the Christian Religion and its Adversaries, I desire (and in this all discreet sober Christians, I dare say, join with me) that on both Sides we may have free liberty of proposing our arguments and our answers, as occasion may require ; but I also desire for God's sake, for the sake of virtue, of peace and good manners, that not any thing may be written or spoken on either side, touching this controversy, but what strictly relates to the force of argument, and of the truth ; and that particularly all *Railing*, *Reproach*, *Drollery*, and *Merry-making* may be utterly banish'd from the discourses of either side, as being highly unworthy of the subject, which is *God* and his *Holy Religion* ; as being highly misbecoming and unworthy of men of a learned and genteel education and station in life, and as a method in no ways relating to the discovery of truth, but which may irritate and provoke one another to rancour and enmity, and which by degrees may even cause great trouble to the State it self.

But perhaps our Adversaries are grown diffident on their strength of sober ar-

gument (and I suspect this is really their case,) and therefore, as men forc'd to their last shifts, lay hold of this low contemptible way of writing, the style of drollery and ridicule, to molest and offend rather than to attack Religion. They have too much reason to observe, that we live in a merry Age, where Tracts, to cause and promote mirth and laughter, are more likely to be bought up and read, than compositions which enforce the practice of virtue, and improve the mind in useful knowledge; and that by degrees such ludicrous Tracts may possibly effect, what their weak and pointless arguments can never do. But if our Adversaries have the sagacity to observe the present Weakness of the Age, and that they are reduc'd to lay the whole stress of their attempts on their success on this weak side of men to the ruin of Religion, of the honour of God, of the principles and souls of men, and to I know not what dreadful evils, that may thence be justly apprehended to the State it self, is it not necessary that the Civil Magistrate shou'd be as sagacious to provide a speedy and an effectual remedy against such a many-

headed evil, which from a licentiousness practis'd against God and Religion, may and will easily be extended to the imperial Throne it self, and by degrees (such a petulant itch of laughing may so seize the Common-wealth as to) involve it in incurable confusions?

But to consider more particularly this kind of argument of ridicule; if our Persons or our Characters are insulted, or made the subject of common jest by any of our fellow subjects, we have a remedy appointed by law, whereby we may obtain a just satisfaction from such offenders; and is it not much more reasonable that God's Vice-gerent shou'd stand up in defence of God and his Religion, and exercise the severity of the Law against those that shall dare to make them the subjects of their contemptuous scorn and sarcasms? Is the calling upon the Civil Magistrate to check the insolence of such transgressors of the Law to be deem'd an encroachment on the just and legal liberty of the subject? Or is the forcibly depriving such men of the power of venting publickly their scoffs and their taunts at God's Holy Religion, and thereby grieving and

and wounding the ears of all their pious fellow subjects, and insulting them for their meanness of spirit in embracing such an Institution of Religion, I say, is this to be accounted a religious \* persecution of such Persons, or a tyrannous exercise of the legal power? If so, all legal and statuted punishments awarded against criminals wherein the publick safety and tranquillity is concern'd, is a tyrannous prosecution and abuse of the Civil Power, and all fences, and just, and reasonable bounds to liberty are to be pull'd down, and men left to say, and write, and do what they please. I cannot see that such men can require more than is actually (I think it ought to be) indulg'd them. If they are not persuaded of the truth of the Christian Doctrines and Worship, they will not be call'd upon, much less forc'd to give testimony of it; in this as in other matters, they may enjoy a legal and rational freedom. If they have a mind to publish their sentiments on this matter, and to make known the whole strength of

\* I am so averse to all religious persecution, that I would not have any one to be a sufferer in any kind, purely for the sake of his religious opinions or profession.  
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their objections against our Holy Profession; this liberty also is freely indulg'd them; nay, their writings will be read by all men of candor with pleasure. For if Religion be true, the more it is inquir'd into, the more it will be found to be true, and this will always administer both more conviction, and more satisfaction and comfort to the sincerely Religious. If it is not true, it is very just and desirable that all religious impostures shou'd be banish'd from men.

If then this is the present case (as undeniably it is) of our Adversaries in Religion, what can, what ought they to require more? If truth in Religion is their search and concern, they have all just freedom to propose openly their doubts, their objections and their affirmations concerning it. But if nothing will content them, unless they are allow'd to make Religion the theme of their facetious jests and ludicrous entertainments, they ought as Gentlemen, and Men of reason and study, to consider that the Sacred Name of God and of his Religion profess'd and establish'd by the State of which they are members, is a subject too awful and too serious,

serious, than to become the sport and merriment of every Writer or Reader. But perhaps it may be conjectur'd, that our Adversaries chuse rather to engage Religion with the weapons of satyr and ridicule, than with sound reason and argument. I do not wonder at them. For the whole power and force of reason and argument is evidently on the side of our most Holy Religion, against which our Adversaries cannot alledge one solid objection. And moreover, the Religion of Christ, holy and pure as it is, utterly disdains and disallows of all satyr and injurious reflections. Religion is humble and meek, gentle and beneficent to all, delights only in doing good and in the true knowledge and worship of God: so that when she is thus unhappily attack'd, she rather stands upon the *passive* than upon the *defensive*; and chuses rather to suffer patiently injurious treatment, than to *return evil for evil, railing for railing, &c.*

It rather concerns the good of Civil Order and Society to see how far such a malignant and pernicious manner of treating Religion is to be tolerated. For  
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if once religious doctrines, and the Holy Worship of God are suffer'd to be laugh'd out of countenance, 'tis more than probable, that Majesty it self will not long escape so prevailing a virulence.

But let us now proceed to observe a little upon the nature it self of satyr and ridicule; and I confess, in all my reading and study I never found that satyr and ridicule were ever judg'd as proper methods of discerning between truth and falsehood, or of laying a solid foundation of a wise and virtuous conduct in life. Were ever the important counsels of Princes and States regulated by this jocular style of debate: or are the just and equitable decrees of our Courts of Justice the pure effect of satyr and ridicule? Once more, may not the sting of them be equally employ'd against Virtue and Vice, against Religion and Majesty? in a word, is there any thing so sacred, so serious, so important and necessary to the well-being of society, which may not by a ludicrous turn of wit be metamorphos'd into pleasantry and a subject of laughter, where men are dispos'd to it? How then can satyr and ridicule be call'd in

in as methods to distinguish error from truth, vice from virtue, imposture from true Religion, since satyr and ridicule are alike subservient and adverse to each of them? Let us on this occasion call to mind the practice of the Antients: their satyrs and dramatic exhibitions intended to expose and discountenance the vices, misconduct and irregularities of the Age they liv'd in, did not consist of a context of arguments to demonstrate the un lawfulness or depravity of such evil courses; this was rather suppos'd, and was acknowledg'd by every one: they were chiefly witty poetick mirrors and scourges, design'd by a stinging representation of the absurdity and deformity of such practices, to cause the offenders to become the contempt and derision of their fellow-citizens. Such compositions therefore as these did not stand in need of arguments, but of poignant wit, to make use of apposite keen words and phrases for the exposing to publick mirth and shame such lewd extravagances.

But the very wisest and most knowing of the Antient Sages, whatever their private thoughts were concerning the Gods,

and the absurdity of their religious worship, were of too delicate a judgment and taste to expose them to the publick derision, or to make publick sport of them. And this was also the conduct of the Primitive Apologists for the Christian Religion \*. How ridiculous soever and void of common sense were the heathen Theology, the heathen notions of the genealogy and history of the Gods, and their religious rites and practices, those Holy Writers did not employ their pens in trifling mirth and raillery upon them ; they rather had pity on them and set themselves therefore in a serious style to demonstrate the absurdity and vanity of such a system of Religion by solid and plain arguments ; and their labours were bless'd by the divine concurrence with an amazing success. And if those venerable Apologists have at any time deviated from this so rational a method (as I am not aware that they have) such a practice

\* And this is conformable to the stile of the Holy Scriptures. Even that passage of the Prophet *Elijah*, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 27. was agreeable to the Notions the Heathens entertain'd of their Gods, and seems to be rather a defiance of the power of their God *Baal*, than a mere Mockery.

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wou'd be so far from deserving our imitation, that I shou'd rather blame them for it. Even *Celsus* and other Pagan Writers against the Christian Religion (of whose works we have any notice) even these did not employ their learning to confute and confound the Christian Doctrines in the style of drollery and satyrical wit, but chiefly by the force of argument, often indeed intermixing in their compositions, false and prejudic'd notions of the Christian Doctrines, and injurious and groundless fables against the Religion it self.

In the name of God therefore, and for the sake of virtue and good manners, let not our modern Adversaries attempt to do, or be suffer'd to do, what the Ancient Heathens judg'd to be unworthy of men of learning and sobriety. If they are displeas'd with any of those Christian Doctrines and Practices which the Gospel recommends (I do not say which are appointed by human authority) let them freely and candidly publish their reasons of this their displeasure, and we will read them with the same candor, and endeavour to publish a solid and an effectual answer to them, and a satisfactory account of our

our belief, and of that most Pure and most Holy Religion which we have embrac'd. But let all taillery, sporting, and satyrical medleys for the sake of mere diversion, be utterly discarded from all compositions and treatises on the truth of Religion. If our Adversaries decline to accept this challenge and will still go on to mispend their time and encourage themselves in satyr and ridicule, I answer, the *Church of Christ* knows no such custom nor practice; we can return no other answer to such a procedure, but that we leave them to God and to the Civil Magistrate. But this answer I will yet return, and conclude with it, that we shall have reason to judge such a conduct to be a publick acknowledgment that they have nothing to offer in derogation to the truth of the Christian Religion, but that they are enemies to it only for the sake of its purity and holiness of doctrine and precepts, and of distinguishing themselves from the rest of their fellow-subjects.



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